

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."

BOOK V.

CHAPTER IX. CLEMENT UNDERSTANDS WHY THE LOCK WAS OILED.

It was barely nine o'clock on that same bright summer Sunday evening of which I have written in my last chapter, when Clement Charlewood reached his home. But Walter was already in bed.

"He went up-stairs half an hour ago," said Penelope, "and locked his door. I wanted a book that he had carried to his room, and knocked at his door to ask for it, but he would not answer for a long time, and at last called out that he was in bed, and that it was useless to knock and disturb him, for he should make it a rule not to take any notice of such interruptions. Civil, wasn't it?"

"It is very strange," said Clement, thoughtfully. "Watty was always pettish and quick tempered, but it seems to me that his disposition is changing lately into moroseness and brutality. This freak of shutting himself up in his own room, too, is unlike his old self."

The brother and sister chatted together some time longer. Clement said a few words to his sister about his chance meeting with little Corda; but he did not, in repeating what the child had said, mention Mabel's name. It seemed impossible to him to talk about her, even to Penelope. He was sure of Penny's fullest sympathy for himself, but the risk of provoking a sharp word against her involved too painful a possibility.

Long before twelve o'clock all was profoundly quiet in the little household at Barnsbury. Mrs. Charlewood was with her daughter in Mayfair. The little servant had gone home to sleep. Clement and his sister had supped quietly and had retired to rest. A little after midnight, Penelope, who slept lightly, raised herself on her elbow to listen to an unusual sound in the basement story.

"It is just as though some one were trying the street door," she said to herself. Then she listened more intently. For a few minutes all was still, then again came the sound. This time it was unmistakably the noise made by a key in the lock of the street door. Penny promptly wrapped a shawl round her shoulders,

thrust her feet into slippers, and ran softly and swiftly to Clement's door.

"Clem!" she cried, "Clem, get up for an instant. There's an odd noise down-stairs. I'm not desperately frightened, but I should like to satisfy myself what it is. I will wait for you on the stairs."

She stood still, looking out of the staircase window into the darkness, and in a few minutes her brother joined her.

"What is it?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Some one tampering with the lock of the house door. Hush! There again! Don't you hear it?"

"Yes; I hear it distinctly enough, but I don't think there can be any cause for alarm. I secured the fastening myself. Besides, house-breakers don't come to one's door and announce themselves in that way, and Heaven knows we have little to tempt thieves. However, we will see what it is."

As he spoke, he struck a match and lit a candle. The noise down-stairs grew louder. A key was being violently moved about in the lock, and the door shook and rattled.

"Shall I call Walter?" asked Penelope.

"Yes," answered her brother, after a moment's thought; "call him."

She knocked loudly at Walter's door, calling him at the same time by name, and urging him to rise. There was no response.

"If the house were on fire, Wat would infallibly be burnt in his bed," muttered Penelope, running down-stairs. Clement was already in the passage, and the noise without had ceased. Penelope took the candle and held it whilst her brother undid the fastenings of the door. As soon as it was opened, a man pushed into the passage and staggered against the wall. The flare of the candle fell full upon his face. It was Walter Charlewood. Clement had already raised his hand to repulse the intruder, but, on recognising his brother, stood still, transfixed with surprise. Penelope gave a great start, but uttered no sound, and the three remained for some seconds silent and motionless.

"Where's my mother?" demanded Walter, at length, glaring wildly at the others. His face was pale, his hair dishevelled, his dress disordered. He spoke thickly and huskily, and leant against the wall behind him to support himself.

"Walter!" cried Clement, fixing his eyes upon his brother's face, "can I believe my senses!"

You here? *You*, whom we supposed to be asleep in your room hours ago, stealing into your home like a thief in the night! Oh, Wat, Wat! Why is this? What have we done that you should bring this sorrow and shame on us?"

Walter only replied by an oath, and folding his arms across his breast, looked doggedly at his brother.

"Clem," whispered Penelope, "say no more to him at present. The wretched boy is not himself. You see he has added drinking to the list of his vices. Let him get to rest now, and to-morrow we can speak to him more calmly."

"Thank God," murmured Clement, "that my mother is not here."

"Ah, Clem," said Penelope, with a sigh, "I hardly dare to say what I suspect, but I greatly fear that my poor mother has witnessed similar scenes often before, when you and I supposed her to be peacefully at rest. Heaven help her—and us!"

During this whispered talk, Walter had stood leaning against the wall, swaying to and fro, and frowning and biting his white lips. Now he looked up defiantly, and said: "Are we to stay here all night? Or do you mean to allow me to pass you, and go to bed?"

Without a word, Clement drew aside, and Walter, with a visible effort, straightened himself and walked to the stairs. He stumbled and staggered as he began to mount them, and Penelope covered her eyes with her hand, to shut out the humiliating spectacle. They heard him open the door of his chamber and enter it.

"His own door was locked, you see, and he had the key with him," said Penny. Clement examined the street door. There was a latch-key remaining in the lock outside, but, owing to the inside fastenings having been secured, Walter had not been able to gain access to the house. Clement took possession of the latch-key, made all secure once more, and then turned and looked at his sister. Their eyes met, and Penelope, with a sudden impulse, seized her brother's hand and kissed it. "Oh, Clem, my dearest brother, such a return for your generous forbearance! Such a reward for your patient striving to shield and save him!"

Clement wrung her hand hard, but his face was still and stern. "Get to bed, dear," he said. "Try to sleep, Penny. There is to-morrow to come."

They parted and went to rest. All was again silent in the little house, except the loud ticking of a clock in the kitchen. But though there was silence, there was not peace. Walter had fallen almost immediately into a heavy slumber, and his sister heard him breathing stertorously as she lay in the chamber over his. But Clement sat half dressed, as he was revolving many thoughts in his mind, until daybreak; and Penelope lay wakeful and anxious in her bed, starting if a board creaked, straining her ears to listen to every sound; and when at length she fell into an uneasy sleep, it was peopled with painful images.

A ray of bright sunshine falling on her face awoke her in the morning, and she started up with that vague feeling which most people have experienced on awaking after some sorrow or disaster; a consciousness of distress combined with a lurking hope that it will prove to have been all a dream.

It was no dream, however, as poor Penelope acknowledged to herself presently. She dressed quickly, and went down to the kitchen. It was yet so early that the little servant had not arrived. Penelope opened the shutters, lit a fire, and began to prepare the breakfast. While she was thus occupied, Clement joined her.

"My poor boy!" she cried, seeing his haggard face, "you look as if you had been dead and buried since yesterday."

"If it were not for you and mother, I should say no matter how soon I *am* dead and buried, Penny. It's weary work. Everything that I set my heart on seems to crumble into dust."

He stood at the kitchen window, looking out on to the dreary crockery-bestrewn field, with its patches of rank grass, and its tall gibbet-like posts, with their announcement respecting "this eligible plot of building ground," blistering in the sunshine. His sister was silent. She knew that no words of hers would sweeten the bitterness that was in his heart; but she had faith in him, and knew that the natural ebullition of hurt angry feeling would leave him still brave, honest, and true-hearted at the core. By-and-by, when Penny was staggering under the weight of a great kettle she had just filled and brought from the scullery, he took it from her and placed it on the fire. As he did so, his eyes fell on her hands, discoloured, coarse, and dragged out of shape.

"Poor Penny," he murmured absently, "how your hands are spoiled. They used to be so white and pretty."

The words touched some little feminine chord in her heart. Tears, that real deep grief could rarely wring from her, sprang into her eyes. She bent her head over the fire to hide them, but they dropped and dropped more and more thickly, until she covered her eyes with her hands, and, sinking into a chair, sobbed aloud. Her brother came to her, stroked her hair, and spoke soothingly, but she continued to weep for some time. At last the paroxysm wore itself out, and she wiped her eyes and composed her countenance.

"I hope you don't really suppose that I was crying in that idiotic manner over the departed beauty of my hands, eh, Clem? Because, however appearances may be against me, I have not yet reached *that* pitch of imbecility. But what you said seemed just to—to bring all kinds of troubles so vividly before my mind again, that—that—but I don't often indulge you in this fashion, do I?"

"You're the best and bravest girl in the world, Penny."

"No, I'm not; but I like to hear you say so. Now, whilst we are waiting for the kettle to boil, would you mind telling me, Clement, what

course you think of pursuing with that wretched degraded boy up-stairs?"

Penelope's face grew very hard as she spoke of Walter.

Clement had been thinking of little else during all those weary hours, and had shaped a plan in his mind, which he now proceeded to unfold to his sister.

Before the Charlewoods had left Hammerham, and whilst Clement's plans were yet undecided, old Stephens, the chief clerk who had grown grey in the service of the firm, had made some proffers of assistance to his young master. They were made with a good deal of hesitation, and with more delicacy than a cursory acquaintance with the brusque dry-mannered Hammerham clerk might have led one to anticipate. He had first, in a somewhat roundabout fashion, offered to supply the family with any ready money of which they might stand in need. On Clement's earnest and grateful assurance that such assistance was not necessary, Stephens had then broached a project, which he thought promised well for Clement's future career. The old clerk had a brother who had been settled for many years at Rio Janeiro, and was a wealthy thriving merchant there. "He's quite a great man there, is George," said Stephens, "and he hasn't forgotten old times nor old friends either, as great men do sometimes. If I was to write half a line to George he'd be proud and glad to have you in his counting-house, Mr. Clem, you may take my word for that, sir. Now, you needn't to shake your head and smile, Mr. Clem, George was once a very poor helpless bit of a lad, not knowing quite certainly where next day's dinner was to come from; and the governor—Mr. Charlewood, sir"—the old man's voice grew husky, and he turned away his head—"well, sir, our governor, he gave him a helping hand. He knew the value of his money, did the governor, in those days, Mr. Clem, and he wasn't one to make ducks and drakes of it for the sake of making a flourish of generosity; but he gave George a helping hand, sir; he did. The lad had a chance of a good berth out in those foreign parts, but he was too poor to take advantage of it, and, to make a long story short, Mr. Clem, the governor rigged him out with a good outfit, and gave him a pound or two in his pocket, and set him afloat. And that was the beginning of George's fortune, and if you asked him he'd tell you the same, sir. It's five-and-twenty years ago, Mr. Clem; you were a toddling little chap in petticoats at the time. And I don't say but that the money was all paid back honourably, many a long year ago. But there's some things that ought never to be forgotten if it was a thousand years. And I've never forgotten *that*, Mr. Clem; no more has George, either."

Had Clement been alone in the world, he would doubtless have accepted the old clerk's offer, and have tried his fortune abroad. But it would have been out of the question to take his mother and sister with him on such a venture, and he could not make up his mind to leave

them. Besides, there was Walter, and the promise he had made to his father respecting him. So, considerably to Stephens's disappointment, the idea was abandoned, and Clement, as we have seen, obtained a situation in the house of Messrs. McCulloch and Co., a building firm in London. But in his painful and anxious meditations about his brother, the recollection of Stephens's proposal had flashed on Clement's mind, and had seemed to offer a ray of hope, and a possible career for Walter, far away from the evil influences which appeared to surround him in England.

"It's only a very great deal too good for him," muttered Penelope, whose face, nevertheless, grew brighter as she listened to her brother.

"Whether it is good or bad for him—whether anything can be good for him any more, infatuated boy—remains to be seen, Penny. But I think it is the only chance left for him. Of course we must tell Stephens the truth, painful though it may be. We cannot let him send Walter to his brother's counting-house on any false pretences. We must ask that he may be received on trial, and as a favour for which we should all be deeply grateful."

Penelope Charlewood—although all that was fine in her nature had ripened and mellowed under adversity—had not entirely freed herself from the influences of many years passed in money-worship, and amongst money-worshippers.

"It does seem hard," she said, half aloud, and with the steely glitter in her eyes—"it does seem very hard to have to ask a favour—and such a favour—from old Stephens!"

Clement looked at her reproachfully.

"The occasion of our asking the favour is hard enough, Penny," he said. "But surely it is good to know—"

"Oh yes, yes," she broke in, hastily. "I know it all, every bit. It's good to have a faithful friend, even though he be a Hammerham hired clerk, who wears high-lows and white cotton stockings. It's perfectly true, and I'm a good-for-nothing ungrateful creature. But, Clem, I can't get up to your moral altitudes, and it's no use trying. I only get a kind of moral crick in the neck by straining upwards. I suppose there is *so* hope of *Wat* doing any good here?"

"I fear, none. I thought when I got him to return to our home that he would be comparatively safe, and under my own eye. But the discovery of last night has shown me that things are ten times worse than before. You see, there is no doubt that poor mother, in her weak affection, has connived at the vile deception, the practical lie, that Walter has been acting all this time. We can't deny that to ourselves."

Penny bit her lips, and checked an angry exclamation.

"When I think," she cried, "of her stealing down tremblingly night after night to unfasten the bolts, so that he might enter undiscovered with his key. Ah, poor mother, poor mother!"

"Yes, Penny; poor mother. She has been

terribly misled by her indulgent love for Walter. But it is useless to say more on that head. One thing clearly results from this discovery, that there is no safety for Walter or for any of us so long as he remains at home."

Before the little servant rang to be admitted, Clement and Penelope had breakfasted, and had agreed that it would be well for the former to have an interview alone with Walter before going to his office.

CHAPTER X. SECRET SERVICE.

CHANCE had brought Mrs. Hutchins again into contact with the Trescotts. Her lodger, Mr. Shaw, was engaged at the same theatre with Mr. Trescott, and had renewed his acquaintance with Corda. Lingo's protecting regard for the little girl had, Jerry Shaw maintained, influenced his master in her favour. "We often talk of the time at Kildare," said Jerry to Mr. Trescott, with inscrutable gravity, "and Lingo has always the kind word for your little white colleen."

With Corda's father and brother, Mr. Shaw steadfastly refused to form any close acquaintance. Alfred, indeed, would have contemptuously rejected all advances towards intimacy on the part of Jerry Shaw, had any such been made. If he had any feeling at all for the old man, it was dislike. But Jerry troubled neither father nor son, and limited his attention strictly to Corda. He would escort the child on long excursions into the country. They usually proceeded in the following manner. Corda was put into an omnibus, bound for some distant outskirt of London. Mr. Shaw would mount on to the top, and Lingo, if disposed for much exercise, would run by the side of the vehicle. Arrived at their destination, Mr. Shaw and his young companion would alight, and strike across some pleasant path through the fields, or along a pretty high road, bordered with tangled hedges, and with a rustic inn or dwelling-house here and there breaking its monotony. Lingo trotted before them or beside them, or sometimes walked solemnly at their heels with a responsible air. These walks were very pleasant to Corda. She and her oddly-matched companion chatted together with quaint gravity. Jerry Shaw was well acquainted with the country, and with the hidden treasure-houses of delight and interest to be found in hedgerow, meadow, and coppice. He had wonderful stories to tell of his boyish days in Ireland (for to Corda he had long ceased to deny the land of his birth, as he sometimes chose to do to the rest of the world), of tramps over wide bog and barren mountain, of fishing in sequestered streams, of dangerous boating in the rock-bound bays and creeks of the blue Atlantic, of wild mad gallops over long desolate tracts of country on a half-broken spirited blood horse.

Once Corda had said to him: "Then you must have been rich when you were young, Mr. Shaw, if you had a horse to ride upon." Jerry had thereupon shut his lips as with a spring, and for

an hour had uttered no articulate sound, only the long snif, which Corda had learned to interpret as a sign of dissatisfaction. But thenceforward the child's instinctive quickness and delicacy made her keen to avoid such occasions of offence. Jerry kept a scrupulously accurate register of the cost of all these excursions, and presented it weekly to Mr. Trescott for the payment of his daughter's share. Jerry was very poor, though, as he often boasted, he and Lingo did not owe a farthing in the world. The weekly account between himself and Mr. Trescott, however, was simply a homage to Corda's feelings. The old man perceived her to be uneasy at the idea that her father should allow her to be a burden on Mr. Shaw's slender purse. Corda was well enough acquainted with poverty to look upon sixpences as serious things; and the payment of her omnibus fare, performed in her presence with much ceremony, was a great relief to her tender conscience, and made her feel free to enjoy the pure air and pleasant rambles thus obtained; but there was no record kept of the cool leaves full of fresh dainty fruit, the bowls of rich milk, and slices of sweet country bread with which Corda was regaled on these occasions.

"I'm a peculiarly greedy old man," Jerry would say, in his jerky manner. "I never can see fresh fruit without wanting to buy some. Same with milk. Did ye ever taste buttermilk? Well, perhaps this is better, but it's a matter of taste, ye know. Ate up the rest of those cherries, Corda machree, and take warning by me. I'm so horribly greedy that when I see 'em, I think I want 'em, and when I've got 'em, divil a one of 'em can I swallow! It's a very bad thing to be greedy. Ate 'em up, colleen bawn."

Mrs. Hutchins's opinion of her lodger was very fluctuating. The rent for his one room was paid with exemplary punctuality, and the room itself was kept in a state of neat cleanliness that was a standing reproach to the slatternly condition of the rest of the house. But Lingo was a subject of unceasing wonder and curiosity in Mrs. Hutchins's mind; and his relations with his master appeared to her so mysterious as to warrant grave doubts whether Mr. Shaw were not some weird magician in disguise, and Lingo his familiar spirit.

"Talk of dogs of Montargis!" Mrs. Hutchins would say, argumentatively. "Show me the dog of Montargis as 'll go to the butcher's for his three-penn'orth of liver, and bring it home in his mouth! I think there's summat queer about the beast. I do raly."

"Something queer," in Mrs. Hutchins's vocabulary, meant something that she did not quite comprehend; and whatever Mrs. Hutchins did not quite comprehend, she invariably supposed to be evil. Mr. Shaw was, however, a favourite with his landlord. His punctuality, his neatness, his honesty, and his taciturnity, recommended themselves favourably to Mr. Hutchins. The latter had himself great command of silence, which was one of his wife's cherished

grievances; and the dumb nod that passed between him and his lodger whenever they chanced to meet, appeared to be in consonance with Mr. Hutchins's feelings, and to draw him towards old Jerry with an attraction that neither cordiality of manner nor eloquence of speech could have exercised. Jerry's opinion of the saturnine, elf-locked carpenter, was confidentially expressed to Lingo, and was not unfavourable. "Ay, ay," said he, in the tone of voice that a man uses who is unable to cope with another in argument, but retains a stubborn conviction struggling for utterance, "ay, ay, I know he's not *your* sort. Too dry. No warmth of manner. You're as explosive as a rocket yourself. Touch, and go; and, as I often tell you, your weak point is betraying your feelings. The fact is, you're all wag with your friends." (By which phrase Mr. Shaw intended no reference to Lingo's buoyant sense of humour, but merely alluded to his tail.) "But Hutchins isn't a bad fellow. Any man married to that woman *must* end by being either a mute or a murderer. By George, I'd like to know which you'd have done *yourself* under the circumstances? Aha!"

Lingo blinked with one eye, gave a lazy thump of his tail on the floor, and, opening his jaws in a prodigious yawn, showed a formidable range of strong yellow teeth, in exceedingly good condition.

"Of coarse ye would!" exclaimed Jerry, triumphantly, and as if he had received the fullest categorical reply. "Of coarse ye would, divil doubt ye!"

This conversation—if the word may be so used, in Jerry's imagination it was decidedly so—was taking place on the Monday succeeding the evening made memorable by Mr. Fluke's charity sermon. Jerry Shaw was seated at the table, spectacles on nose, mending a pair of trousers with great neatness and dexterity, and Lingo lay stretched at his feet. Suddenly the dog pricked up one ear attentively, there came a tap at the door, and the next moment Mr. Hutchins put his head into the room.

"Talk of the—umph!" muttered old Jerry aside to Lingo. Then he nodded at his landlord, and motioned him to enter. Mr. Hutchins peered at his lodger from beneath his tangled black locks with a helpless perplexed expression. He had seen the old man daily for three or four months, and had never yet spoken to him. It appeared to require a great effort to begin. At length, however, he said in a strong Hammerham dialect, "Her's very bad."

"Her! Who?" asked Shaw, looking up.

"The little wench. Cordy they calls her."

Before he had well uttered the words, Jerry had sprung to his feet, and the dog, seeing the sudden movement, ran towards the door in violent excitement.

"Now, now, now," said Jerry, hastily buttoning his coat, "be aisy—be cool. Don't be putting yourself into this state. I know. I'm going. But, take my advice, and lie down for two seconds."

The docile beast obeyed, keeping his intelligent eyes upon his master's face, and obviously ready to leap up again at a moment's notice.

"What's the matter? Who told you?" asked Mr. Shaw.

"Well, it wur the young woman where they lodges. I see her this mornin'. And her says the little wench wur took bad last night, her says. Her's abed now, her says."

The delivery of this address—Mr. Hutchins being almost entirely unaccustomed to private as well as to public speaking—took some time. When it was finished, Mr. Shaw was already making his way down-stairs. Lingo, conscious of some unusual excitement, bounded eagerly before him. Mr. Hutchins opened the street door with his strong workman's hand.

"Her's a—a nice mild little wench," said he, hesitatingly. "Niver blethers nor bounces, *her* doesn't. I wish—I shud like—I—"

"Thank ye," said Jerry, with a sparkle in his stolid grey eye. "I understand. I'll tell her that you asked kindly for her, and send your duty, and hope she'll soon get better."

Mr. Hutchins nodded expressively. Hammerham artisans do not habitually touch their caps to their superiors. Mr. Hutchins, however, made some approach to doing so, by pulling a straggling lock of hair that hung over his eyes. The action was intended to convey his consciousness that the shabby old man, who lodged in his house at the weekly rent of five shillings, and who mended his own trousers, was a gentleman. A fact to the perception of which his wife's finer poetical faculties had not yet attained.

Jerry Shaw, preceded by Lingo, arrived at the Trescotts' lodgings. Mr. Trescott was out. Corda was still in bed. The doctor had just left her. The servant didn't think there was much the matter. Did not know what her illness was. Hoped it was nothing catching. Could not tell whether the child might see anybody, or not. She was alone now.

Mr. Shaw stood hesitating in the narrow passage, and the servant, holding the door in her hand, was trying to edge him out into the street again, when a loud bark from the upper story was followed by the tinkle of a cracked bell.

"Lord bless us!" cried the servant, a low-browed cross-grained woman, "the little gurl's a ringin'. I ain't got time to be nursery-maid."

Jerry silently—he did most things silently—hung his hat and crooked stick on a peg in the passage, and walked softly up-stairs. Corda was still occupying her brother's room. Alfred had not been home since she had fallen ill, and the doctor had desired that for the present, at least, the child should not be moved. The old man stood at the half-open door for a minute, tapped softly, and then went in.

Corda was lying in bed, with one thin blue-veined hand outside the coverlet. Lingo was sitting on his haunches at the bedside, and in this posture his head just attained the level of the little frail hand into which he had thrust his nose. Corda's face was turned towards the door. Her cheeks were flushed, and her large eyes

blazed feverishly. The gold-brown curls were thrown back from her forehead, as though they had heated it.

"Oh, *good* Mr. Shaw!" she cried, when she saw him, and big bright tears gathered in her eyes, and rolled down her face on to the bed-clothes.

"I knew you were here, because Lingo came up-stairs to tell me. He startled me a little at first by barking, but he didn't know that I must be quiet. When I told him what the doctor said, he was very still and gentle, weren't you, Lingo?"

Lingo's tail, stretched on the floor at right angles with his body, vibrated with suppressed emotion, but he remained otherwise motionless.

"Colleen bawn, this won't do," said Mr. Shaw, abruptly, but in a subdued voice. "What's to become of us, if ye fall sick on our hands, will ye tell me that?"

Corda smiled. "Oh, I am not *very* sick, Mr. Shaw. I shall soon be better. And I am not crying because I'm sorry," added the child, with sensitive apprehension lest he should be hurt, "but because I'm glad to see you. It's de—debility, the doctor says. Do you think it *is* debility?"

"If the doctor says so, Corda asthore, it's probably—true," replied Jerry, ending his speech with an air of saying something unexpected. "But what knocked you over so suddenly, mavourneen?"

Jerry's lips had been long unused to accents of tenderness, and with their resumption came the familiar phrases of his boyhood. Caressing words that had been crooned into his ear by nurse or mother in the old, old time. Corda looked up at him with solemn searching eyes, eyes that had *forgotten themselves*, and were intent on seeing, with no idea of seeming. A thought flashed up into her face as she looked, and trembled over the sensitive countenance like sunlight on clear waters. "I wonder," she said; and then ceased, and dropped her eyes.

"If I would do something for you? Is that your wonder, you mysterious 'little Leprechaun'?"

"Yes, partly. And if—if it would be right to ask you."

"Sorra a fear of that, machree, if you think you'd like to ask it."

Corda shook her head doubtfully. "I wish I was *sure*," she said. "Isn't it hard to be *sure*, Mr. Shaw? I thought and thought all yesterday evening, and nearly all night, and then at last I said my prayers, and afterwards I felt—I hoped that God would let me do what was right, if I tried *really*, you know."

Jerry Shaw watched the child keenly. He was puzzled. "What can be troubling that pure tender conscience?" thought he.

Corda pushed her hand beneath the pillow that supported her head, and drew forth a letter.

"Would you," she asked, "would you get me a pen and ink from the parlour, Mr. Shaw? They would not let me have them yesterday."

"Did you want to write, then?" cried Jerry, more and more perplexed.

"Only the direction. The inside of the letter is written. I did it with a pencil."

"But, Corda, is that all the great favour you had to ask of me? It's a mighty little matter to make such a fuss about!"

"No; not quite all. If you would please to get me the pen and ink first, I will tell you what I want to ask afterwards."

Mr. Shaw descended to the parlour in silence, took up the inkstand and a pen that had seen long service, and returned to Corda's bedside with them. She thanked him, and sitting up in bed, scrawled a direction on the envelope. Then she turned to Mr. Shaw, still holding the letter firmly in her hand, and said: "This is the favour, Mr. Shaw. Will you put this letter in the post for me? I wouldn't ask you if I was able to go out and do it myself. And—stop a moment, please, that's not all. Will you promise not to look at the direction, and never to tell anybody about the letter, not—even papa?"

"Corda!"

"Indeed, I think it's right. Indeed, indeed I do. I know it seems sly and secret, but I hope I am doing what is best. Pray believe me."

She was so excited, and trembled so much, that the old man made her lie down, smoothed her hair from her brow, and bathed her forehead with some eau-de-Cologne that stood on the table. The sweet water was the property of her brother. Alfred Trescott was prone to indulge in such personal luxuries. But old Jerry neither knew nor cared anything about that. Presently Corda spoke again.

"If you think you can't promise, Mr. Shaw, I shall know it is because you think it would not be right. And you are much older and wiser than I, and I shall be sure you are not a bit unkind."

"I can promise, Corda, and I do promise. There's my word on it."

"Oh, thank you; thank you a thousand times! And I hope—I do hope you don't think ill of me for it." Corda glanced up very wistfully into his face as she spoke.

"Lingo," said Jerry Shaw, "exert your fine common sense and good feeling. Don't be sitting there on end like a china dog on a chimney-piece! Bedad, you're a quare fish; there's times when I can scarcely make you out myself. Tell Corda what we think of her."

The dog, who had watched his master's face unwinkingly during this address, rose up with his fore-paws resting on the bed, stretched out his rough head, and gently pushing aside her sleeve with his nose, licked Corda's fair slight hand and arm affectionately.

"I'm proud of ye, sir," said Jerry, seizing Lingo's bushy tail and shaking it with much heartiness. "You're a fine fellow, and I'm proud of ye. Now I'm going to do my errand. I shan't be long gone, and, meanwhile, you will remain with this lady and take care of her, d'ye hear me, now? Your behaviour this day has done equal honour to your head and heart, let me tell you that!"

Jerry took Corda's letter, carefully abstaining from glancing at the address on the cover.

"Oh, which letter-box will I put it into, asthore? Town or country?" he asked, pausing with his hand on the door.

"Town, please, Mr. Shaw," answered Corda, faintly, a bright blush flitting over her face.

"Very good, Corda. Now take my advice and lie still, and go to sleep if you can. You're worried and over-wrought altogether. And, Lingo, don't bother her with talk, d'ye mind me, now? Be aisy and quiet, and watch her silently."

Old Jerry's hobbling footsteps died away down the stairs, and the street door was heard to shut behind him.

Lingo gently withdrew his head from Corda's caressing hand, gave it a final hasty lick as an assurance of his unaltered regard, and then stretched himself on the floor with his nose between his fore-paws, as motionless as a stone, save for the heaving of his shaggy sides.

END OF BOOK V.

A HOLIDAY IN NORMANDY.

THE Grand Cours at Caen is the shady walk between the river and the green sea of meadows going out towards Montaign. We were there last night—the vigil of the Assumption, the eve of the Sainte Napoleon—a most sombre oppressive night, with a cloudy red moon, and thunder brooding in the air. In the distance, as the grey mist rose from the prairies to meet the twilight descending, we heard the *ra-ta-ta, ra-ta-plan* of drums at the barrack near the bridge of Vancelles, and glimmering through the low branches of the elms we espied a throng of Chinese lanterns, dancing up and down, whirling round and round—white, green, blue, red, orange, striped, parti-coloured—then the flare of a torch, of two torches, of three, four, five, six, of a regiment of torches! It was the Fête des Flambeaux, and we were just in time to see the procession start from the barrack-yard, the soldiers stepping out to a quick gay march, the inner ranks bearing each a tall pole with five globe-lanterns aloft, and the outer ranks carrying torches that flittered in smoky pennons of crimson flame.

There was but a light scattering of crowd on the Cours, and, as the procession vanished luridly down a narrow street into the town, we turned a quieter way to gain our lodgings in the Rue St. Jean, where the windows look down on a green court, once the site of the old house where Charlotte Corday lived awhile with her aunt, Madame Coutellier de Bretterville, and ruminated that act of pagan heroism which has made her name immortal in the annals of revolution. Laurels, jessamine, bright ivy, wild hop, sycamore-trees, and rustling poplars fill the space where, until 1850, stood "an ancient house, with walls grey, rain-worn, fretted by time into a thousand crannies; a well, stone-rimmed, greened with moss, occupied an angle of the court; a doorway, narrow, low, its fluted jambes meeting in an arch overhead, showed the hollowed steps of a spiral stair

leading to the upper story; two lattice-windows, glazed in octagonal leaded frames, faintly lit the stair, and the vast, bare chamber"—the chamber of Charlotte.

It was all dusk under the trees as we entered the court, but it was not ghostly, for the shrill, high voices of half a dozen young bonnes laughing and gabbling round the kitchen door made it cheerful enough. How handsome are some of these Norman women! There is Françoise, a tall, straight, strong girl, with fair hair, large, languid, dark-grey eyes, firm features, clear skin, and dignity of movement enough for a duchess, as she hands a plate, and brings in a dish at dinner. She ought to bring in none but "lordly dishes." And there is Louise, the portière, the prettiest creature, with the prettiest way of forgetting everything of her duty but the bell, and the most piquant gestures, and "Eh!" to show her pearls of teeth when she is remonstrated with—for as for *solding* Louise, a female dragon could not do it!

They were all on the qui vive for the passing of the Fête des Flambeaux; the merry bonnes and Louise came quickly forward to tell us we must go up into a room over the porte-cochère to see the procession come through the street by-and-by. We mounted to this room, the veriest old rats' hole, by an outside stone stair, with iron balustrade festooned with wild hop, and the bonnes mounted too, and Elise, the excellent cook, in a holiday temper. The stiff-set little body placed herself in an ancient tapestry chair, splendid, perhaps, when Louis the Fourteenth was king, and patiently awaited the arrival of the fête, but the bonnes crowded the windows vociferously, and Louise, taking us under her special direction and patronage, pointed out neighbours, friends, and acquaintance in the moving throng below. Baggy red trousers were more numerous than any others, and a remark to that effect put to flight all the pretty portress's smiles and dimples. It was wonderful how patriotic became her sweet eyes, her lively voice, when we said half the young men in France seemed to be soldiers.

"Mais tous. But all!" cried she, tragically, with hands uplifted. "We see no young men in my pays now!"

We asked what was her pays.

"Villers-Bocage, mam'zelle. Ah, it is gay, it is pretty! Trees, trees the whole way from Caen—but no young men. The conscription comes and takes them all. I don't know what we shall do! They go here, they go there; we cannot tell where they go. But they never come back. It is sad that—sad, *mais oui*."

Françoise joined us, stately, serious. "You have no soldiers in England, mam'zelle, only sailors?"

We told her that we had soldiers enough for the work they had to do, and pretty good soldiers on the whole.

The multitude in the street increased, and every now and then an alarm was raised of the procession coming, but still it did not come. Omnibuses came; diligences came, from La

Deliverande, Luc, Langrune, Lion, conveying travellers to the railway ; carts came, light and heavy ; and by-and-by an immense country wagon, piled high with sacks of grain, and drawn by four huge grey horses. The driver walked at the head of the leader, crying sonorously to open the way : " L'Empereur ! L'Empereur ! L'Empereur ! " and the people fell back, laughing as at a good joke. The cumbersome machine thundered out of sight, and all was quiet again but the rustle of feet and hum of voices on the pavement.

At last, with a rattle of drums and triumphant music, the procession came : first, a dim transparency of Napoleon the Third, backed by a dim Eagle, and guarded by the torches flaring more smokily ; then a diminished rank of lanterns, one blazing up to final extinction, and falling to be stamped out by the feet of the crowd. At a quick march from the Rue des Carmes, round the corner by the church of St. Jean, towards the Place St. Pierre the soldiers advanced, with grimed faces, reeking hot, and the mob trampling in a solid mass behind, before, beside them. Here and there the glare of a torch lighted up a visage in the mingled throng that looked possessed ; but the swift pace left men little breath to shout, and the cries of " L'Empereur ! " were faint, and few, and far between. We fancied we could distinguish the one voice that feebly raised them all.

But when the procession passed a second time, when the torches were burnt to the stump, and the lanterns were burnt out, when the band struck up *Partant pour la Syrie*, and the fête was almost in the dark, then there was a chorus to wake all the echoes in Caen, living and dead—not the voice of a blithe, wholesome enthusiasm, but of an excitement wrought up to frenzy, to fever-heat, " full of sound and fury signifying nothing."

" It is not like that in England, mam'zelle ? " said Elise, the cook.

We said, " No, it was not like that in England."

The Fête des Flambeaux was over, and midnight brought thunder, lightning, and rain. And with thunder, lightning, and rain, rose the Sainte Napoleon, and the great day of the Blessed Mary's Assumption. The Holy Virgin, the chosen protectress of France, had her thousands and tens of thousands of devotees at the early services, but there was no press of loyal people to celebrate the Fête of the Emperor when *Te Deum* was sung at noon in the great church of St. Etienne. We went betimes, to secure good places for seeing the show, but we made a haste that nobody else made. And with what vivacity the rain poured all the way ! We might have taken our leisure to arrive an hour later, and we should still have been early enough for all that came to pass. By advice of an amiable little peasant we went up into the triforium, and a lame old scholar in velvet skull-cap, who had taken an advantageous post which commanded the sanctuary and the nave to the west door, where the military were to

enter, offered it to us with a gay and gracious courtesy, saying that he had occasion to witness the ceremony every year of his life, and that perhaps we might never have a second opportunity. And so he drew back his stool, and stood behind us, content with casual glimpses of the time present, and as the glorious music rolled through the vast arches, was rapt away in dim reveries of the time past, to judge from the expression of his then spiritual face and bright far-gazing eyes.

And there is food enough for reverie in this grand old church of William the Conqueror for those who cherish historic memories. Men built well in his days, and here we look still on the very lines they conceived, the very stones they piled in the vast nave, the lofty vaults, the noble transepts. The large simplicity of the plan strikes us with a grave admiration. The spaces, the masses, are perfectly distributed and combined. There are neglect and dust ; there are the traces of violent ravage, of war, of revolution ; but there is no mean attempt at restoration to vex us, and no profusion of ornament to distract. Outside, Vandalism has been active and methodical in constructing even more than in destroying ; but within, this finest and most ancient of the Norman basilicas has suffered chiefly from being let alone.

Long ago, in the wars of religion in the sixteenth century, the ashes of the founder were scattered to the four winds ; but an inscription in black marble marks the place of his sepulture in front of the high altar, signifying that, there, had been buried, in 1087, the invincible William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy and King of England.

To-day the Conqueror's memorial stone was hidden by a gaudy carpet and velvet chairs, set in due gradation of rank for the officials who were to attend this public celebration of the Emperor's fête by command of authority. A distant sound of martial music announced their approach, and presently, out of the rain, through the great doors, marched in a double file of sappers, and took up their places at either side of the altar—tall men, bronzed, bearded like pards, and wearing on their breasts three or four medals each, trophies of valour and victory. Then came the flag, guarded, and blare blare, tramp tramp, clang clang, the band and the regiment, and overflowed the nave, and the aisles, and the transepts. The last ranks formed in two lines from the entrance to the gate of the choir, and between them, marshalled by the gigantic Swiss, in festal costume of scarlet and gold and white panache, advanced the general, the mayor, the president of the imperial court, the prefect, followed by a crowd of dignitaries in red robes, in orange robes, in silver lace, in blue scarves, in all sorts of official finery, and possessed the stalls and chairs of the choir up to the steps of the sanctuary.

And last, most splendid of all, entered the clergy, and mass began—a short military mass to the sound of fifes, cornets, drums, trumpets, clarions, and all kinds of music. Censers

swung, heads bowed, the host was elevated, and then from the great organ rolled the *Te Deum*, and filled the high vaults with sacred clamour.

It was over. The chief priest blessed the congregation from the steps of the altar, and out into the rain again marched the soldiers, the officials, the people. We turned to go too, and then the courteous old scholar, with a lively air of gratulation, addressed us, and said: "You will remember this day, and boast of it as one of the most beautiful in your lives, when you saw the *Fête* of the Emperor of the French, Napoleon the Third, celebrated in the church of William the Conqueror!"

THE "LONG" FIRM.

THE "Long" Firm is an old-established house, with head-quarters in Manchester, branch establishments in most of the principal cities and towns in the United Kingdom, and correspondents all over the world. Originally founded by three brothers of the name of Long, it has since passed into other hands, though, like most old and reputable establishments, the firm is still designated by the name of the founders.

The principle on which its business is conducted is extremely simple, and calculated to result in large profits:—to buy everything, and to pay for nothing. The firm has never yet been through the Bankruptcy Court, and it passed scathless through the recent commercial crisis which resulted in the ruin of so many less securely constituted establishments. Having had commercial relations with the concern to the extent of upwards of a hundred pounds, I can testify to the promptitude, tact, and energy, with which their business is conducted. Friends of mine have also been honoured with the favours of the "Long" Firm.

My friend Mr. Layling, sculptor, had exhibited a number of valuable works in marble, bronze, and ivory at a Fine Art Exhibition in Manchester. The term of the exhibition was drawing to a close without any of these objects being sold, when Mr. Layling received a note from a Liverpool gentleman, requesting to know the lowest price that would be accepted for the whole collection, the writer being disposed to purchase it to adorn his mansion. The letter contained some intelligent and appreciative remarks on many of the works—particularising their merits, hinting at defects—and appeared to be written by a cultivated connoisseur. It was dated from an aristocratic-sounding square, and Mr. Layling having little doubt that he was entering on a correspondence with a wealthy merchant-prince, replied, naming his terms. The customer returned answer, that, although he could not consider the price named, extravagant for such a collection, it nevertheless exceeded his present means; but he offered to purchase several of the articles separately, particularly mentioning an ivory plaque of a *Minerva*, which he directed to be forwarded at once, promising

to send its price, twenty-five guineas, on receipt. The "plaque" was duly sent. Not receiving the money or a reply from his patron, Mr. Layling took a journey to Liverpool from the south of England, and there hunted up the square with the aristocratic name from which the letter was dated. The square was a court. Knocking at the door of a hotel, he inquired if Mr. Carruthers lived there? A poorly-dressed woman said:

"Yes—but he was away; would not return for some days."

"Very good; you're his wife, of course. I'm Mr. Layling, from Surrey. I see how it is—I have been swindled; but I give you half an hour in which to return my ivory carving, and pay my expenses to Liverpool. If you don't do it, I shall call the police, give you in custody, and break your windows." And he took a seat.

The woman at first protested that her husband had pawned the ivory carving; but after a deal of trouble she produced it from a bundle of rags in the corner of the room.

Having recovered his *Minerva*, Mr. Layling consented to dispense with the police.

"Now," said he, "pay me my thirty-seven shillings travelling expenses, or I break your windows."

"Well, sir," replied the woman, "I will be candid with you. It is no good asking us for money, for we haven't a sixpence in the house. We have been very unfortunate lately, and business dull. It is quite true that we belong to the "Long" Firm, but we are not the principals in the business—my husband is merely employed at a salary of thirty shillings a week, and a commission on what he brings in. As to the police, they know us very well; and if you like to call them, you are welcome. Many people are weak enough to think we can be given in charge for this sort of thing, but they find out their mistake. Their only course is to sue us for debt; and as we never have anything to seize, it is never worth while. Some people waste a deal of money in finding this out. As for you, sir, I am sure you can't complain, for you've got your goods back."

Mr. Layling being a determined character, broke the windows, and left.

My friend Royston, nurseryman and horticulturist in Hampshire, was actually twice swindled by the same "Long." One summer afternoon a gentleman alights from his dog-cart at Mr. Royston's extensive grounds, and gives in his card, "Mr. Walter Long, Longsight, Manchester." He has come to look out some shrubs, trees, and floricultural rarities, for his "place." He evinces considerable knowledge of the specimens shown him, but defers to Mr. Royston's judgment in the selection. About fifty pounds-worth are chosen, and promised to be sent off. Mr. Long explained that he never ran bills, always preferred to pay cash; but having been at great expense about his "place," and having allowed himself to be persuaded to exceed the amount he intended expending in shrubs, he supposed his acceptance at two months would

be satisfactory? The candour of his manner disarming suspicion, Mr. Royston was prevailed upon to part with his goods on those terms. In two months' time he discovered himself to be a victim of the "Long" firm, without hope of redress. It is worse than useless to sue a man on a bill who has got nothing; while, as no "false pretences" had been made, he was not amenable to criminal law, for Mr. Walter Long really did live at Longsight, Manchester, and had a "place" there, comprising two rooms, and about half-a-crown's worth of furniture.

A month after this bill had been disallowed, the same gentleman, in the same dog-cart (hired from the neighbouring town), presented himself once more at Mr. Royston's place of business. Mr. Royston could hardly believe his eyes; called him a thief and a swindler, and ordered him off his grounds.

"All you say may be correct," Mr. Long owned, very calmly. "I am a swindler, and I don't deny it. I am a member of the 'Long' Firm, but our rule is never to swindle the same man twice. I am come to make, as far as lies in my power, reparation for the loss I caused you. You remember those shrubs you sent me? I sold them pretty well, I am pleased to tell you. (Don't be angry, but listen.) They gave such satisfaction, that I now have an order to supply another lot at a much better figure, and I thought I couldn't do better than come and make an honest deal with you for them."

"And you think me fool enough to be gulled a second time?" said Mr. Royston.

"Nothing of the kind, my dear sir; I bring the money with me" (he produced a bundle of notes), "and I do not wish you to part with your goods till they are paid for. I am sure you are too good a man of business to allow any sore feeling at being 'done' before, to interfere with an opportunity of turning money now. Besides, we do business honestly at times. I have a bona fide commission to buy these trees, and out of my profit I will certainly pay you something off the acceptance."

Mr. Royston not seeing how he could lose money on such terms, was finally persuaded to deal. Shrubs were selected to the same amount as before—fifty pounds—packed in his waggon, and started into town; the arrangement being that Mr. Long should drive Mr. Royston to his hotel, where he would pay the account.

Having directed his man not to deliver the goods at the railway station, but to wait with them outside the hotel for orders (a precaution which Mr. Long assented to as quite justified), Mr. Royston mounted the dog-cart, and was driven in town to the hotel by his customer. Arrived there, Mr. Long called for brandy-and-water, cigars, and writing materials; paid his hotel bill, somewhat ostentatiously displaying his gold and notes; and requested Mr. Royston to write him out a receipt for the amount of his account.

This done, Mr. Long began to count out the money in payment; but stopped in the middle

of his occupation, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"This won't do," he said, thoughtfully. "I have not been a swindler for nothing. If I pay you this money now, you will pocket it for your acceptance, and then go and tell your man to drive back to your place again with the shrubs, so that I shall be swindled this time."

Mr. Royston disclaimed any idea of the kind.

"No doubt, my dear sir, no doubt; but a man in my position can't afford to place himself in any one's hands. Now, you see that I have the money to pay, and I know that you have the receipt in your pocket. Tell your man to deliver the goods at the railway station (goods department), when I will give you the notes, and you can hand me the receipt. That's fair to you, and secures me."

Not seeing any hitch, and knowing that Long had the money, Mr. Royston acceded to this proposition, though not without considerable hesitation. Accordingly, the goods were consigned at the railway station to a Manchester firm by Long's direction. Mr. Royston asked for his money.

"Shake hands with me, my dear sir," said Long; "you are the best friend I ever met."

"What do you mean?"

"This. My train starts in ten minutes; you can send in your account when you please, or you can draw on me at two months if you prefer—or book it, you know."

Royston fetched a policeman; but when Mr. Long explained that it was a mere matter of debt to be recovered by the usual process, the constable regretted he could do nothing.

"However," thought Mr. Royston, "I can at least stop my goods." But, on going to the traffic manager, he learnt that goods once consigned to any person could not be reclaimed, any more than a letter dropped into the post: the company being tied by law to deliver them only to the address given.

Mr. Royston took the next train to Manchester, and there communicated with the police, but without effect; for the shrubs were consigned to a most respectable auctioneer, who had no course but to sell them as ordered, and he had handed over the money they realised, to Long before a writ for the amount could be issued against him. Then he was gone. The sheriff's officer told Mr. Royston, "It's no good suing them Longs, sir; there's always writs out for 'em, but they've got nothing to take."

And now for my own case. I am a provincial coachmaker, with a large export trade. In September, 1864, a well but not over-dressed man, about thirty, of Hebrew descent, and of very gentlemanly address, entered my office, and presented this card:

Messrs. JONDERMAIN and Co,
Shippers,
Gracechurch-street,
London.

The time of day was afternoon, two hours before banks closed.

"You are acquainted with my firm, I believe,

and have had previous dealings with them?" he remarked.

I well remembered the familiar card of the house. Three years previously I had had dealings with Messrs. Jondermain, to whose agents in the West Indies I then exported largely. But I had done nothing with them since that time.

"My name," he continued, "is Alfred Harris. I am Messrs. Jondermain's agent in Havre. They are extending their connexion in various quarters, and I have been associated with the firm but recently—much later than the period at which you formerly did business with them."

I then inquired after the health of the junior partner, which I knew had been very delicate.

"Young Mr. Jondermain is still in a most precarious state; he has been in Madeira for the last few months; but is sinking rapidly, and we fear will never return."

All this tallied with what I knew of the young gentleman. If I had had any suspicion at the time (which I had not), this would have dispelled it.

"A widow lady at Havre, a friend of Mr. Jondermain's," Mr. Harris proceeded, "newly returned from the West Indies, and accustomed to use one of your carriages there, has commissioned me to purchase a similar carriage of your make, for her present requirements. I left Mr. Jondermain in London this morning, who has endorsed the order, and, in fact, given me a draft to pay for it."

Mr. Harris was then taken into the show-room, where he immediately selected the carriage required. This again looked right, for it was one of the kind previously sent, per Messrs. Jondermain, to the West Indies. It was a large door-cab phaeton. I informed Mr. Harris that this carriage was already sold, that it would take some weeks to finish another like it, and that the price was one hundred and forty pounds. He appeared much disappointed, told me that the lady could not wait, and that he must get a carriage of that particular sort immediately. I showed him smaller carriages of the same sort, but without doors, at a hundred guineas. For some time he was sure one of these would not do. At length he said that on his own responsibility he was unable to buy anything except exactly what was ordered, but he would go and telegraph to Messrs. Jondermain to ask if they would sanction his taking the smaller carriage? With this decision he left, promising to return in a few hours, as soon as he could get a reply from his principals.

When he was gone, my clerk told me that Mr. Harris knew this particular phaeton he appeared anxious for, to be sold, for that he had been told so. I attached, however, but little importance to the fact at the time.

In about three hours—one hour after banks closed—Mr. Harris again presented himself with a telegraphic reply received from his firm, to the effect that as he best knew the

lady's requirements, they would leave the matter to his judgment.

On this, Mr. Harris agreed to take the smaller phaeton at one hundred guineas, and requested an account to be made out and reciprocated. The customary discount to the firm having been deducted, he begged very hard for a commission on the transaction for himself; indeed, he was nearly a quarter of an hour haggling over this question with true Israelitish skill; but the claim was not allowed.

Thereupon protesting it was a very hard case, Mr. Harris produced a cheque, given him that morning, he said, by his employers, with which to pay for the carriage. The amount of the cheque was one hundred and thirty pounds, intended, as he explained, to purchase the larger phaeton. After the amount of bargaining he had previously displayed, it appeared reasonable enough to suppose that his first intention had been, after beating me down as low as he could, to have finally offered this draft for one hundred and thirty pounds in payment for the one hundred and forty pounds carriage. So far it looked natural and in accordance with Hebrew business. In the present instance, however, he required thirty pounds change from his cheque.

Always accustomed to regard with suspicion anything like an exchange of cheques, more especially after banking hours, I made an excuse respecting the situation in which the crest should be painted, in order to get Mr. Harris down-stairs into the show-room with my clerk, so as to give me five minutes to myself with the cheque. I made the most of this time. Turning out from my pigeon-holes the bundle of correspondence for 1861 marked J, I drew out three or four of Messrs. Jondermain's letters of that date. One of them happened to be an advice of forwarding money, as follows:

"Herewith we have the pleasure to hand you our draft on English and Irish Bank," &c.

Mr. Harris's draft appeared so far in order that it was also on the English and Irish Bank. Next for the signature. As nearly as I could recollect, the previous cheques I had received from the firm had been signed "Jondermain and Co." Mr. Harris's draft was signed "John Jondermain." This might have been suspicious but for two reasons; first, the signature "John Jondermain" was, to all appearance, written by the same hand which had signed my letters "Jondermain and Co." I satisfied myself of this by comparing it with three or four letters. The handwriting in the body of the cheque was also the same. Secondly, it was not improbable that his son being away and not likely ever to return, Mr. Jondermain might have taken to sign drafts in his own name. At all events, having compared the handwriting, I saw no reason to doubt its being the same as the handwriting of many similar drafts I had received from the same firm.

Taking into consideration the familiarity of Mr. Harris with the son's illness, and some other circumstances about the establishment of Messrs. Jondermain; which I have not thought

needful to particularise; his giving me the card of the firm; and the plausible reason for which he required change of the cheque (namely, being unable to get the larger carriage he wanted); and then adding to that, the similarity of the handwriting; I had no doubt of the genuineness of the draft. So when Mr. Harris returned to the office, I began to write out a cheque for the thirty pounds change. I mentioned that my former drafts were signed Jondermain and Co., adding, that I had no doubt this one was correct enough.

"Oh yes," said Mr. Harris; "since his son has been given over, Mr. Jondermain does everything in his own name."

I was about filling up the cheque "to the order of the firm," when my customer begged me to insert his name instead, giving as a reason that his account was debited by Messrs. Jondermain with the total amount of the draft for one hundred and thirty pounds when he received it in the morning, and that consequently my cheque would go into his own bank account. That this was not unreasonable, those most conversant with business transactions of the kind will allow. Moreover, as he professed his indifference, after all, about the matter, I did as he requested, at the same time crossing the cheque to make it payable only through a banker.

With this last precaution, I was satisfied that, even supposing anything could possibly be wrong, there would still be plenty of time to telegraph to Messrs. Jondermain, and get their reply, before the bank opened in the morning, when at worst I could stop my cheque. Accordingly, I agreed to deliver the carriage on the following day, and then had a quarter of an hour's chat with Mr. Harris, whom I found remarkably well informed on most topics. I smoked one of his cigars—a fine-flavoured Regalia, but expensive; for it cost me exactly thirty pounds.

When he left, I telegraphed thus to his firm:

"To Messrs. Jondermain and Co., Grace-church-street, London.

"Received your cheque, a hundred and thirty pounds, for carriage, from Alfred Harris, and gave change thirty pounds. Reply if all right."

At nine o'clock that evening I got a reply as follows:

"We know no such person as Alfred Harris. Cheque forged."

I was about to take my hat to get a private interview with the bank manager to stop my cheque, when a neighbour, a jeweller in the town, dropped in. I told him of the circumstance; when my story came to the cheque, he said:

"I see it all; you're done. I changed your cheque this evening."

"*You* did!"

"I did. A gentleman called on me, purchased a small diamond ring for five pounds ten, and handed me your thirty-pound cheque in payment. 'I suppose you know that name?' he asked, with a smile. 'Oh yes,' said I, with

another smile; and without more ado I gave him change. Wouldn't you have done the same, though it *was* crossed?"

It only remains to offer an explanation of Mr. Harris's manner of working this swindle.

I learned from Messrs. Jondermain, that when I was doing business with them in 1861, they employed an office-lad for a short time to copy letters, and that, having found him out in pilfering stamps, and having also had information that he was a relative of the "Longs," they dismissed him. On turning to their letter-book of the date in question, they found several pages torn out; among them, the pages containing copies of letters to me on the subject of carriages. Supposing the boy to have stolen, in addition, a few cards of the firm and a blank cheque or two, it is easy to make out the sequel. He takes them to his employers, the Longs, who hand them to one of their staff to study. Furnished with all the information required, and a fac-simile of Messrs. Jondermain's signature, "Mr. Harris" wanted nothing but an opportunity to use his knowledge.

If it be asked why I did not endeavour to trace Alfred Harris, the answer is, that I did so the same night, and ineffectually.

OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

A GAMBLER'S LIFE IN THE LAST CENTURY.

ON the 2nd of February, 1725, between nine and ten o'clock at night, three gentlemen, named Gower, Blunt, and Hawkins, left Will's coffee-house in Covent-garden, and went to the Castle Tavern in Drury-lane, with Major Oneby, a well known gamester and duellist. Here Mr. Rich, a friend of the three first-named gentlemen, joined them over their Burgundy. The landlord was obsequious and the drawers civil, for the wine was flowing fast. Some of the party had been to the playhouse together to see the new tragedy of *Hecuba*.

The gambling scene in the *Rake's Progress* shows us the sort of places that Major Oneby, the professional gamester, haunted. Gamblers were the curses of those days, the horror of wives and mothers, the dread of fathers. They were prayed against as men used to pray against the Plague and the Fire. The green cloth these men played upon soon led to the green fields of Tyburn and the leafless tree. Their cards were never without pin-marks on the backs, their dice never fell even. They were always in search of hearty country gentlemen, wild Templars, or reckless City men. They were the great lures to those wainscoted rooms strewn with cards, where men, crazed by their losses, raved unnoticed by the victorious players; while, beside the caged-in fire, moping wretches sat, heedless of the strong waters brought them by the boy of the house, and brooded over the night-ride to Hounslow or Bagshot that should either recoup them for ever, or undo them quite. Their tricks were the old tricks of centuries before, founded on a deep

knowledge of the chief passions and follies of human nature, and seldom found to fail—tricks old even in Holbein's time. In their gangs there was always a combination of talent and of slang. The Guller was the old Jew miser who was ready to lend money to the defeated player when he became excited by the hope of recovering his losses; the Woodpecker was the parasite who hung round the novice and introduced him to the gang; the Eagle was the strong player who knew all the modes of secreting or forcing cards. They had flat-faced rings which reflected the cards that they drew; or they put their gull before a mirror, which reflected his cards to an accomplice. Sometimes a bright-cut steel sword-hilt, laid over their left wrist, answered the same purpose of a mirror. Not unfrequently the Eagle took the form of the Deluder—a careless, handsome Gil Blas, who would drop in by accident and join the game, or stand behind the gull's chair and signal to his accomplices. Button his glove—that meant ace; play with his wig—strong in trumps; touch his solitaire buckle—weak in diamonds. Each finger implied a certain number, and was by turns a beacon or a false light. It was not unfrequent either to purposely spill wine on the table; and even that served to reflect the colour and value of otherwise hidden cards.

Major Oneby was neither the Eagle nor the Woodpecker. He had sunk into the lowest of all gamesters—the Bully. He was the blunt frank old soldier who talked of Marlborough, by —, sir, and Prince Eugène. He had a gross humour of his own, and told infamous stories, when he was not quarrelsome nor dangerous. He roared and cursed for wine at Will's or the Mitre, struck the drawers, trod on people's hats, or kicked their swords as he passed to his seat. He was the terror of all quiet and timidly respectable men. He used to clap his sword on the table, and glance round defiantly at the company. He would howl out blasphemies—addressed to no one specially, but still amounting to a challenge to the fiercest or bravest man in the room. It was necessary to his reputation as a terrorist that he should kill a man now and then, and woe to the young Templar, vain of his fencing, who that night came in his way. He volunteered to show the young country spendthrift the sights of the town. Some evening, after three or four flasks of wine, the Deluder pretends, with his own jovial laugh, to be tired of Garrick and Quin, of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, of the Mall and the fencing-school, of the masquerade and the park. Some people they meet by chance at Will's turn out very lively acquaintances, with a turn for faro or chicken hazard. They adjourn to a gambling-house, and set to work with the dice and the red and black pips. Mr. Littlebrain, the rich young gentleman from Somersetshire, at first wins surprisingly. The gold tide sets in towards him. They call for more Burgundy. He insists on higher stakes, astonished to find how he is startling the old dice-shakers of Covent-

garden. More Burgundy, the room seems to get lighter and larger, the dice fly out faster and faster. The tide at last turns, the gold floats from him in shoals. He has now lost all he had won and five thousand guineas more, besides the large farm near Taunton. He has also signed some papers that a good-natured old lawyer present requires as securities for the loan of another thousand, already half gone. Gradually the fumes of the wine subside, and one suspicious glance discloses to him the old lawyer changing a pack of cards which he (novice) had placed ready at his elbow. He sees a friend make signs to the benevolent lawyer. Then he feels into what a pack of wolves he has fallen. In a moment Littlebrain dashes over his chair, leaps on a settee, gets down his hat and sword from the peg behind the door, and shouts "Thieves!" from the window to the watch, who have just passed, crying, sleepily:

"Past four, and a rainy morning."

The gang is furious, their eyes glare, they prepare for a stampede. The gallant captain, whose red face, barred with black plaster, looks like a hot fire seen between the bars of a grate, sweeps two or three dozen guineas from the green cloth into his panniers of pockets. Then some one knocks out the lights, several swords clash with Littlebrain's, and one passes through his unlucky body. He staggers to the stairs, and falls headlong down them—dead. There is a dash at the watchmen, who threaten the gamblers with their staves. The old men, however, fall before the tempestuous charge, and the next moment there is no one in the gambling-house but two frightened women, an old watchman, who is holding the dim lantern to the dead man's face with one hand, and removing his watch and purse with the other; the only sound is the wind whistling through the key-hole. In such affairs, subtle, cruel, and deadly, Major Oneby has been no subordinate actor.

To return to our story. All went on at first merry and friendly. The flask went round, and the wit went with it. At last a wager is laid between Mr. Rich and Mr. Blunt as to whether Mr. Mills did or did not act the other day the part of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's play. Both gentlemen are opinionated and heated, but one of the two is of course wrong, and Mr. Blunt loses. The flask-bottle being empty, Mr. Rich and the major call for a box and for dice. The drawer says they have dice but no box. Not much gambling evidently goes on at the Castle Tavern. It is only the blunt hearty major who seems to care much about the matter, but he is persistent, and his energy forces on the company to play.

"No dice-box?" he says. "Well, then, drawer, bring the pepper-box."

Mr. Hawkins, knowing how gambling spoils good talk and a friendly evening, looks rather averse to the turn things are taking, and says:

"Let us play low."

And, after a trifling loss, refuses to play any more. The major turns his gross burly body at this, and glowers at him with his blood-

shot eyes, affecting himself to be the promoter of all the amusement of the evening.

"Why do you come into company," he says angrily to Mr. Hawkins, "when you won't do as others do?"

Mr. Hawkins answers coldly, "Don't trouble yourself, sir, about me. I'll do as I please."

Mr. Rich, more sanguine and careless, called out:

"Who will set me three half-crowns?"

Mr. Gower jocularly drew some money from his pocket, and holding it in his closed hand upon the table, said:

"I'll set ye three pieces."

He then lifted his hand, and they proved to be only three halfpence. The major, who was in earnest, and had very serious views of play, grew more vexed at the game being simply derided, fired up, and swore that Gower was an impudent puppy to set three halfpence.

Then Mr. Gower effervesced also, and cried:

"Sir, I am not afraid of ye, and he that calls me a puppy is a scoundrel."

Quick as the serpent light that rose in his eyes the major snatched up a bottle by the neck and swung it fiercely and swiftly at the head of Mr. Gower. The flask bottle, heavy with Burgundy, brushed Mr. Gower's wig and struck a cloud of white powder from it, but it did no hurt. Mr. Gower, in return, tossed more coolly a wine-glass at the major. Both at the same moment then pushed back their chairs and ran to their swords. Gower, nimbler and younger, jumped on the table and reached his from the peg first. Then stepping down he drew and stood on defence, but made no offer to lunge. In the mean time, Major Oneby also took down his sword and cane, which hung together, and there being a table and chair in his way, came fiercely round the table to do battle with Mr. Gower, but Mr. Rich stepped between them, and told the major, as he was drawing his sword,

"If you make a lunge, major, it must be through my body, and as I am unarmed, that will be wilful murder."

The duellists of those days knew all the legal boundaries between murder and homicide.

Mr. Gower then threw his sword by on a table, and they all sat down again.

"Come, major," said Mr. Gower, offering his hand frankly, "let us be reconciled. Words spoken in heat may be forgotten and forgiven."

But the major, driven from his booty, was inexorable. He growled:

"By —, you lie. I'll have your blood, by —." Then turning to Mr. Hawkins furiously, he said, "This is all along of you."

"Why, then," replied Mr. Hawkins, "if you have done with him and have anything to say to me, I am your man, and will see you out."

"No!" said the soured major, "I have another fellow to deal with first."

Mr. Blunt good-naturedly invited the whole company to dinner on the next day, hoping to prevent future mischief.

"No! I'll dine with none of ye," exclaimed Oneby.

"Are you angry, sir?" said Mr. Blunt. "Have you anything to say to me?"

"Or me?" said Mr. Hawkins.

"Or me?" said Mr. Rich.

No; he had nothing to say to any of them. This was between two and three in the morning.

At last some one rose and proposed to go. The major, who had continued a sort of sullen talk, threw his big rough coat over his broad shoulders, and fastened one or two of the buttons. These coats were useful to bullies in sword encounters, for they baffled thrusts and entangled blades. Mr. Hawkins came out first; Mr. Blunt and Rich followed; Mr. Gower was last. Mr. Hawkins asked John Barnes, the drawer, if his chair was ready, as it was raining. Being told it was, he went out, the drawer unbarring the front door into Drury-lane for them. Just as Mr. Gower was following, Major Oneby, all the time in a smoulder, now broke out once more into full flame, and said to Gower:

"Hark ye, young gentleman, a word wi' ye."

Gower turned back; he and the major both re-entered the room, and Mr. Rich heard the door slammed savagely, and the bolt shot with the violence of rage. Then there was heard a loud rasping and clashing of swords, and heavy stamps on the floor. Death was locked in with them. Rich and Blunt, hearing open war broke out, called to the drawer to open the door. The door would not yield at first either at bolt or hinge, but by their united efforts the three at last forced it open and got in.

Too late, too late. Poor Gower had been disarmed and was already struck; Major Oneby, intent on death, guarded the door. He wanted to taste his revenge, and was delaying the coup de grace as cats delay the death of the mouse they torture. His sword was pointing at his enemy. Gower then, in the intensity of despair, closed with the gambler, rather as if he were falling forward against him through weakness, but still feebly intent on a mortal grapple, for he knew well he was in the hands of a professional assassin. The major clutched his shoulder with his left hand, but quitted him when the three men broke in, and Barnes, the drawer, cried:

"For God's sake what are you doing?"

As Mr. Rich held up his hand to part the two men, he felt the sting of a sword pricking through his coat. It was Major Oneby's sword, but there seemed to be no intention in him to wound Mr. Rich. Almost at the same moment Mr. Blunt cried out that he was stabbed in the stomach, but in the excitement no one could decide whether it was done in mistake by Mr. Gower or in a rage by Major Oneby. The wound was supposed to be mortal.

At this moment Mr. Hawkins returned—he who had at first scented out the major's real character, and persuaded his friends not to play. He had been waiting out under a pent-house as it rained, and there was no chair near, nor any watchman to call one. Seeing none of the company come out, he concluded that there was

either some mischief brewing, or another bottle of wine to be had, so he stepped back into the tavern. There he found a cluster of pale and horrified faces, sobered now, watching poor Gower, who was bleeding, and leaning half fainting over a chair. There was not twelve hours' life in him. In another chair sat Mr. Blunt, moaning, and also apparently dying.

Mr. Shaw, a surgeon then in the house, came and dressed the wounds of both men. Mr. Blunt proved to be dangerously hurt. Mr. Gower was languishing; his intestines appeared at the wound. A second rupture was also suspected. The major with the bloodshot eyes and the evil mouth stood by in his frizzy campaigning wig, his cruel hand on the tarnished hilt of his sword, swearing that the first glass had been flung by Mr. Gower, and that he (the major) had not only received the first affront, but had also been first drawn upon.

When the two wounded men had been sent home in sedan-chairs, Mr. Rich and Mr. Hawkins came out of the tavern with Major Oneby, slow pacing and melancholy. It had been an evil night, and the moon was rising over the roofs of a dull blood colour. Mr. Rich said to the major as they walked together:

"I am afraid you have killed Mr. Gower."

To which the major replied confidently:

"No, I might have done it if I would, but I have only frightened him. Suppose I had killed him? I know what to do in these affairs; for if I had killed him to-night in the heat of passion, I should have had the law on my side; but if I had done it at any other time it would have looked like a set meeting and not a rencontre."

The major was learned in duels, but he had forgotten the law for once. The presumption of law was, that if a considerable interval elapsed between a provocation and a fight, the renewal of the quarrel proved malice, and made the aggressor a murderer.

Mr. Rich knew this, and remembered that the major first began the quarrel in his vexation at the friends refusing to play at hazard after the second main; so he simply said:

"I advise you to make off, for fear of the worst."

The frightened waiter, when the dangerous company left the Castle Tavern, went peering about the room with a light. There were several small pools of blood, especially close to the wainscot behind the flap of the great oval table where Rich had found Gower's sword stained with blood for five inches from the point.

The next evening a mysterious letter was brought to Mr. Burdet, a surgeon near Red Lion-square, by a man in a coach, desiring him to come and see Major Oneby at the house of a Mr. Gardiner in Dean-street, where he was concealing himself, having been wounded in a rencontre. The major had one wound an inch and a half long below his knee and one on his flank; two of his fingers were cut in the first joints; there were several holes and cuts in his clothes; but there was an unreal air about the

wounds which made the surgeon feel suspicious, for they were none of them a quarter of an inch deep, and the thrust below the knee was only a graze.

That same day Mr. Gower slowly sank and died. Mr. Rich, bending over him, asked him, just before the change for death came on, "if he had received his wound fairly?" He answered faintly, with great effort:

"I think I did—but—I don't know—what might have happened—if you—had not—come in." It is probable that Major Oneby, having disarmed the young fellow, would have stabbed him mercilessly till he had killed him on the spot.

The major was tried at the Old Bailey in March of the same year. He pleaded that he had not first called for the box and dice, and that Mr. Gower threw the glass and drew first; but the court decided that it was clear the prisoner gave the first provocation, and it was not denied that he killed the deceased. If there had been no reconciliation from the time the bottle was thrown to the time the last thrust was made, it was murder.

The jury agreed upon a special verdict. The counsel on both sides then drew up their points of the evidence for the consideration of the judges. The major, who had entertained great hopes of getting off for "manslaughter," rather struck silent by this delay, was remanded to Newgate, where he spent a whole year comfortably, without irons, and in the best room of the prison. Finding that no steps had been taken by the prosecutor to bring on the case, he now considered that the enemy had no hopes, and moved to have the case tried in the King's Bench. The case was tried in February, 1726. Lord Chief Justice Raymond, however, adjourned the case.

On his way back to Newgate the gallant officer was boisterous, jovial, hopeful, and exulting. He stopped and dined at the King's Arms Tavern in the Strand. He was sure, he boasted, that the special verdict would be in his favour, and he should have nothing to do but to return to the army and repair the loss of the trial by plundering the enemy. Men of this kind always trade on their former positions in their days of innocence.

On the 6th of May, 1727, the judges met at Serjeants Inn, if possible to end the case. Meanwhile his not very honourable antecedents had been found out and considered. John Oneby, aged fifty-three, was the son of a respectable and successful lawyer at Barwell, in Leicestershire. The boy had been well educated, and served his clerkship with a man eminent in the profession; but young Oneby was proud and ambitious; he aimed at higher things than clerkships, and chafed at the restrictions of the office. Sir Nathan Wright, the lord-keeper, being a near relation of his mother, application was made to him to push the fortunes of his young kinsman, but all he could or would give him was the humble place of a train-bearer. Oneby brooked this for some time, hoping for a better prize; but

finding none come, he threw down the keeper's train with disgust, and resolved to join the army abroad. His friends soon procured him a commission, and he served under Marlborough in Flanders. The career suited his turbulent spirit, and he acquired the reputation of a useful and brave officer, having fought in several battles and sieges, and received several wounds. The dark side of his nature soon began to show itself. He became quarrelsome and revengeful. He had a duel at Bruges, outside the camp, with an officer of horse. Oneby's wounded antagonist died the next day. A court-martial was held, but the duel having been considered fair, Oneby was honourably acquitted, and was now known among "people of honour" as a duellist that had felled his man. He afterwards fought a Lieutenant Tooley at Port Royal, in Jamaica. Both combatants were desperately wounded, but Tooley lingered for eight months before he died. Oneby was never brought to trial. By seniority Oneby had risen, after twenty-two years' hard service, to the rank of major in Honeywood's regiment of dragoons; but the peace of Utrecht coming, the major had to seek other roads to fortune, and Mercury soon found him one covered with green cloth.

The major had still one virtue left. He had courage. While the judges at Serjeants Inn were deciding on his fate, he made extremely merry, and kept high revel in Newgate over smoking punch, drinking the healths of his judges, who he boasted knew him to be a man of honour, and resolved not to hurt him. In the midst of his tipsy songs a good-natured friend, whom he had known over the green cloth, entered with a grisly oath, and swore that eleven of the twelve judges had decided to bring it in **WILFUL MURDER**. This struck down the hopes of the roysterling major as with a poleaxe. To use his own confession, "it frightened him curiously." To lower him still more, and to hang, as it were, his whole mind with black, two or three men he had sent to watch and listen round Serjeants Inn did not return that night to the Ark, and this made his fears rise up like a swelling sea. The fact was, that the judges, having heard counsel on both sides, had broken up about ten at night without declaring their final opinion. No one, therefore, could speak with certainty; but from small things that leaked out through the lawyers' clerks and porters, it was generally thought that the major would be shortly cast for murder.

Oneby, shaking off his drunkenness, felt the ground sinking under him; he called over the roll of his few respectable friends before the last desperate step of throwing himself on the king's mercy, clinging, however, still to the smallest hopes; as a man, finding a bush on the cliff-side fail him as he climbs, snatches at even a flower or at blades of grass. The wretched man still flattered himself that the judges might determine in his favour, till one day the cell door opened, and the keeper of Newgate entered, followed by a beetled-browed jailer carrying a pile of heavy chains.

The order had come that the major was to be double ironed. He was to have a man placed in his room every night. The sense of having once been a gentleman returned vividly to his mind; he appeared much shocked, and was eager to know whether any secret order of the judges had arrived, or whether it arose from some false information of his desire to escape. He hoped the latter; but the keeper refused to satisfy him, and ordered the jailer to at once put on the irons. The rascal's heart gave way at this degradation, and he burst into tears.

The person appointed to watch in the major's room was a man named John Hooper, afterwards the public executioner, an honest and faithful fellow, who obtained his promotion "by pure merit and without bribes," as a contemporaneous paper says applaudingly. The major expressed at first great horror at his hard, malign face.

"What the d---" he said, in his old blustering way, "do you bring this fellow here for? Whenever I look at him I shall think of hanging." But he soon grew reconciled when he found Hooper was a mimic, a teller of ribald stories, who could imitate the itinerant Methodists, and joke, and describe all the humours of the prison and the half wild beasts that inhabited it.

Three weeks more of this cruel suspense and wavering justice, and the gamester was brought up to the King's Bench bar to receive the judgment of the court. Lord Chief Justice Raymond told him that the judges had unanimously found him guilty of wilful murder, and recapitulated to him their reasons. The prisoner prayed to be recommended to his Majesty's clemency for his long and faithful services in the army. The judges turned stony faces upon the miserable man. As to mercy, he must, they said, apply for that elsewhere; where he stood now was only a court of justice. Formal sentence of death was, at last, passed upon him, and his execution ordered for the 4th of July.

He had exhausted his London friends; he must now go himself, like the prodigal son returning from a far country, and sue to his Leicestershire friends. He wrote abjectly to them, begging their pardon for past follies, and entreating them to come up and help him. Some did relent; but the major's old haughtiness resisted all rebukes, and one relation left Newgate and instantly posted home. A cousin only continued with him faithfully, from real pity, till his death. That one lingering friend, perhaps, proved that there was still some redeeming point left in a bad man. The major had boasted largely of the noblemen he had known in Flanders and met at gambling-tables; but his friends, on inquiring, found no one who would speak for him, or even deliver his petition.

Flesh flies live on corruption. Grub-street had unanimously resolved to turn a penny by the major. About a week before his death, a street pamphlet was published, entitled The

Weight of Blood : being the Case of Major John Oneby. It was a catch-penny, containing merely the trial from the Sessions paper, part of a sermon upon duels by a Mr. Hales of Eton, and Sir Richard Steel's Theatre, No. 26, on the same subject. By the pamphleteer himself there were only three or four short paragraphs. The remarks that especially affronted the major were these :

" . . . But as to Oneby, 'tis greatly to be feared that as he lived a profligate he will die a reprobate, having declared since his conviction that neither his confinement nor his crime ever gave him so much uneasiness as his cursed garters (as he is pleased to call his fetters). After sentence was pronounced, this bravo showed outward marks of a very great internal shock."

The ragged garretter who wrote this street chap-book had actually the boundless impudence to visit the major in Newgate, to inform him, as a friend, that such a work was in the press, and suggesting that, as it might retard or prevent a reprieve, the author had better be bought off. In case the major could not be squeezed, and refused to become a milch cow, the eminent author probably thought he might, in that case, at least collect from the turnkeys or his own observation some facts to heighten the seasoning of his work. No money was, however, to be drawn, and the worthy descendant of Curnil left. When the major read the book, and discovered that the author and his visitor were one and the same, he flew into a stormy rage, and cursed and swore even in the presence of the ordinary. He then tried several stratagems to decoy the poor author into Newgate; but the eminent author was shy, and Oneby's efforts proved ineffectual. It preyed upon him, however; and only three days before his death he said he desired but one thing in the world, and that was to have the satisfaction of taking leave of that rascally fellow with a sound whip: so sensitive can a scoundrel be to a form of scoundrelism to which he is unaccustomed!

Soon after this, the doomed man's violent and inflammable temper had another trial from a selfish and ungrateful world. An obsequious undertaker came one morning into the press-yard at Newgate, and sent in the following letter:

"Honoured Sir. This is to inform you that I follow the business of an undertaker in Drury-lane, where I have lived many years, and am well known to several of your friends. As you are to die on Monday, and have not, as I suppose, spoke to anybody else about your funeral, if your honour shall think fit to give me orders, I will perform it as cheap and in as decent a manner as any man alive.

"Your honour's unknown humble servant,
"G. H."

The burst of rage into which the major broke reached the undertaker in the press-yard, and he fled in dismay. He still continued to write letters to persons of distinction he had seen or

spoken to when in the army, to intercede for him; but all in vain. On the Saturday he learnt that his petition had been presented and refused. He was gloomy, but obdurate; he showed no fear, and expressed no sorrow. The noise of the Saturday night's market rose round Newgate, the flare of the baxter's lanterns and grease-pans gleamed into the condemned cells. The major went to bed about ten, as usual. At four on the Sunday morning, about daybreak, when all was still, the condemned man woke up the turnkey, Hooper, who was in his room, and called for a glass of brandy-and-water. The old drunkard's thirst was on him, and he seemed low and depressed. He then raised himself in his heavy-curtained bed, and, getting pen and ink, wrote out his last will and testament; for the noose, ready knotted, was lying already in steep for him in the press-room, and the hangman was perhaps at that very moment dreaming of his fees and of the coming job. He wrote his will; it was brief enough; he had nothing to leave but his frayed, wine-splashed, cut coat, his tarnished sword, some false dice, and a pack of prepared cards:

"Cousin Turvill, give Mr. Ackerman, the turnkey below-stairs, half a guinea; and Jack, who waits in my room, five shillings. The poor devils have had a great deal of trouble with me since I have been here."

The major only requested Jack and his watchers to go outside and be silent, as he wanted to compose himself against the coming of his friends. He drew his curtains carefully, and the men fell asleep again. The silence was unbroken till about seven, when his footman entered the room to call him. The major called out faintly, as if half asleep:

"Who is that? Philip?"

Soon after, a friend (probably Cousin Turvill, almost his only friend) came in, and, going to his bedside, called several times "Major! Major!" but getting no answer, he at last drew back the dingy curtains. The bed was streaming with blood; it lay everywhere in coagulated pools on the counterpane. The wretched man was dying. He had balked the hangman of his fees. A surgeon was sent for; Hooper ran like a madman for him. Philip stanch'd a deep gash in the wrist, which the desperate man had cut with the penknife he had mended the pen with that had made his will.

A TALE WITH A STRIKING MORAL.

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THE summer of 1865 was notable for such a perpetual blaze of sunshine, that the demand on all hands for umbrellas was nearly as great as if the season had been a rainy one.

On the evening of one of the fiercest of the fierce days of July, two young people were sauntering round the quays of Marseilles, enjoying some whiffs of air which found their way at rare intervals from the Mediterranean. Nearly the entire population was abroad that evening, gasping for those few whiffs.

Bearing in mind the heat and the degree of languor engendered by it, it was curious to observe with how much of energy our young couple spoke. Monsieur Pierre Grandal and Mademoiselle Eugénie Beauchour were a well-looking couple. As, in the course of their walk along the quays, they came under the light of the lamps, it was possible to see, to some extent, what they were like. Pierre Grandal was a promising young fellow enough to look at; tall and well grown, with energy and good humour conspicuous in his physiognomy. He belonged, as did the young girl by his side, to the bourgeoisie.

Among other things which the lamps revealed was the fact that Mademoiselle Beauchour was, considering that bourgeois origin of hers, very smartly dressed. Too smartly, perhaps. She was habited according to the mode of that particular season. Metallic coruscations were observable in her bonnet, which was as small as possible, and of a frail and perishable fabric. Her silk jacket, too, was be-bugled and laced to a wicked extent, and, terrible to relate, there was something trailing behind her in the Marseilles dirt, which bore some sort of resemblance to a train. It was too bad. Old Beauchour was in the wine and spirit trade, and was said to have feathered his nest tolerably; but in spite of all that, Mademoiselle Eugénie was got up on a scale that caused neighbouring matrons to shake their heads. This very "get up" was the subject of conversation between our two young people at the moment when we began listening.

"Now, look here, Eugénie," young Monsieur Grandal was saying at this particular juncture, "you do acknowledge—don't you?—that, considering all things, you are rather a fine lady?"

"I don't know what you mean," retorted mademoiselle.

"Well, I mean that your habits of life are ever so little extravagant, don't you think?—your style of dressing, for instance—?"

"Yes; my style of dressing?" echoed the young lady in a tone which suggested that poor Monsieur Pierre was on hazardous ground.

"Your style of dressing," repeated Pierre. "Is it not rather expensive?"

"I cannot dress like a femme de chambre," replied the young lady, "to please anybody."

A pause; for Pierre Grandal had something to gulp down before continuing the conversation. It was rather an unpleasant one, and it seemed almost a pity to spend that evening in pursuing it. For this opportunity of talking to Eugénie, to some extent in private, was one such as seldom fell to the lot of our youngster. In France young ladies are more carefully watched than they are in our own country.

Pierre Grandal and Eugénie Beauchour had known each other from the time when they were children, their respective parents being old friends; but even under these circumstances it was an uncommon thing for them to be able to speak to each other alone. This very walk along

the quays was not a solitary ramble; old Monsieur Beauchour and his wife being in attendance not far off, and a younger brother, the inevitable *ami de collège boy*, in a semi-military dress, being also of the party.

"Eugénie," said Monsieur Pierre, and his voice was troubled, for he felt that a crisis of some sort was at hand, "no one wants you to dress like a femme de chambre, but it is possible to be a little economical in your dress, without doing anything of the sort. Does there not exist any one to please, for whom you would consent to be more moderate?"

"I know of no such person," answered Eugénie, haughtily.

"Eugénie," continued Monsieur Grandal, warming as he spoke, "have you heard of this new thing that has taken place at Marseilles? Have you heard that the men of the town have banded themselves together, to bring about such a change in the existing state of things as that marriage shall become possible to men of moderate means? Eugénie, this *STRIKE*, as it is called, is not a thing originating in pique or malice, but in sheer self-defence. What can men do who are in the position which I have mentioned? They are not people of fortune—not even what society calls gentlemen. They cannot keep a host of servants to attend to their wants. They require that their wives should keep house for them economically; that while a fortune has still to be made, there should be no extravagance in dress. Is all this so very dreadful?" continued Monsieur Pierre, observing a gesture of disapproval on the part of his companion. "And is there no one to please whom you would undertake to live some such a life as I have hinted at?"

Mademoiselle Eugénie was fairly out of patience. "No, I should think not," she cried, with a stamp of her foot. "And as to your Strike, I think you're all a set of conceited stingy wretches, fancying yourselves of much greater importance than you really are!"

"Don't include me, mademoiselle," urged Pierre, angrily. "I have not joined the Strike."

"Then I think," retorted the young lady, "that the best thing you can do is to repair that mistake, and join it as soon as possible."

"Your advice shall be taken, mademoiselle. Here are your papa and mamma; allow me to say 'bon soir.'"

And so they parted, Mademoiselle Eugénie to repair to her apartment, and there to give way to floods of tears, Monsieur Pierre to rush off to the head-quarters of the Strike to enrol himself as one of its most enthusiastic members.

II.

What a curious thing pride is! Mademoiselle Eugénie Beauchour spent the night which succeeded that evening walk upon the quays in bitter tears, while, as to Pierre Grandal, when he woke on the following morning, after a very brief and troubled sleep, and remembered that he

had joined the Strike, I believe that he felt very much inclined to pay another visit to the port, and drop quietly into deep water when nobody happened to be looking. What had he done? He had united himself to this band of young men, who had pledged themselves not to marry till a marked change had taken place in the habits of the young lady population of Marseilles. Extravagance in dress, general luxuriously of life, crinoline, a certain arrogance of tone, total ignorance of domestic matters, and an inordinate love of pleasures of an undomestic sort—these were some of the subjects at issue between the young men and the young women of Marseilles, and till these should consent to reform their milliners' bills, to study housekeeping, and generally to come down a peg or two, the Strike was to continue, and the registrar of marriages was to enjoy a sinecure.

Pierre Grandal went about his avocations on that day, and on many subsequent days, in a very disconsolate frame of mind. He was so unhappy that he could not always hide his melancholy, and some of his friends, and especially such as were included among the United Strikers, rallied him. It was an unfortunate part of the thing, too, that he could not always avoid the company of Mademoiselle Eugénie as much as he could have wished. In the daytime, he had his business to attend to, and constant application kept him from thinking; but, in the evening, it was different. Meetings of the two families, from which Pierre could not always absent himself, were frequent. The agonies endured by our young friend on these occasions were very great. Till now he had never known how much he had admired Mademoiselle Eugénie; only now, when that little sort of understanding between them, which had once existed, was at an end. He began to curse his folly in having ever spoken to her on the subject of economy in dress. He accused himself of having been a meddling prig. He had been egged on to that step, if the truth must be told, by a certain married sister of his, who had represented to him that Mademoiselle Beaucour's style of dressing was altogether beyond her station, and would certainly prove the ruin of any man who should be rash enough to take her to wife. "Why could not my married sister keep her advice to herself?"

One evening he sat gnawing his moustache, watching Eugénie. She was in the coolest way imaginable working at her embroidery, and listening to the conversation of Sub-Lieutenant Lemorier, with his thin waist—curse him!

This young officer and his attentions had been the subject of many conversations; but, as the young lady had always laughed at the lieutenant in a very satisfactory manner, such discussions had ever terminated peacefully, and had left our friend Pierre feeling quite comfortable—a master of the situation. But now, everything was topsy-turvy, and the very position of the sub-lieutenant and of himself seemed

to be reversed. Mademoiselle Beaucour actually treated his rival with a certain consideration. She listened when he talked, which she had never done before. She laughed when he was facetious, which was still more wonderful. She patronised him, on the contrary, to a very great extent. At length this gallant officer began to give himself little victorious airs, and to think that his waist and his gummed moustache had done their work.

Sub-Lieutenant Lemorier had never joined the celebrated Marseilles Strike. He was a free man to do what he liked. Pierre was angry with himself for what he had done, and angry—now more than ever—with Mademoiselle Eugénie because she showed no signs of giving in, nor any, even the faintest, indication of regret at the loss of her lover. The only solace which was within reach of Monsieur Pierre was found in the society of those other members of the Strike with whom it was his custom to associate—for it was the practice of those gentlemen to hold frequent meetings, with the view of mutually shoring each other up, and sustaining each other in a firm adherence to the illustrious cause. Many great and remarkable sentiments found utterance when the members of the brotherhood met thus, in cafés or elsewhere.

"This movement of ours," a striker would remark on some one of these occasions, "cannot fail to attract universal attention. The eyes of Europe will be upon us."

There was a little man among the members of this band, whom an ironical destiny had cursed with the name of Legrand, an authority in all matters with which "le sexe" was connected. This small gentleman was much addicted to holding forth on the subject of the Strike.

"I like it," he said one night, when some of the strikers, our unhappy Pierre among them, were assembled at a certain café in the Rue Cannébière. "The Strike suits me well. The women are ready to devour one already. Long live the Strike!" said the little man, taking a sip of eau sucrée with a flourish.

A striker with a red nose and a crimson neck-ribbon, worn, perhaps, with a view to the subduction of the feature in question, remarked that it was his experience also that the sex had become infinitely amiable of late; a bachelor was overwhelmed with civilities since the Strike had been started.

"I am free to confess," continued the little man, "that with regard to the sex, I have never had much to complain of. I don't know how it is, but I believe I have a way with me which they like. Always full of complaisance, they are now, however, ready to fall at one's feet."

"Not all of them," thought poor Pierre; but he did not say anything.

"What I like about it is this," remarked a very young man indeed, who was possessed of two goggle eyes, a turned-up nose, and a fatuous mouth. "What pleases me is, that now we shall be able at last to RULE."

"I have always ruled," observed the little man, *sotto voce*.

The young man with the goggle eyes had a tongue too large for his mouth, and as persons thus gifted always like to hear themselves talk, he proceeded frothily enough.

"The result of my experience has ever been that Woman, being the inferior animal—"

"Certainly," interposed the little man.

"—is never so happy," continued the goggle-eyed striker, "as when she is ruled by *MAN*, her natural superior. This is a truth which has been too much lost sight of. Woman has become too much exalted in the social scale. This will be so no longer. Henceforth," said the young man, rolling his eyes in terrible consciousness of power, "she is subjugated, she is conquered."

"I observe, gentlemen," remarked Pierre, who had not spoken before, "that you all appear to have had great success with the ladies, and that you seem to have found them very easy to manage. Now, with me, I confess it has been different. I have always found this sex, which we call weak, and gentle, and soft, to have resources of their own of no contemptible sort, and especially a power of holding out when once their pride is assailed, which makes me sometimes doubt the ultimate success of the Strike itself."

These remarks met with much opposition. No one would hear a word in disparagement of this great movement.

"But we can't strike for ever," urged Monsieur Pierre, still full of misgivings.

"We have no intention of giving in," cried several strikers, speaking at once.

"Well, then, suppose the other case," Grandal went on. "Suppose *they* give in, or at any rate profess to give in, and then when we, satisfied with our victory, come also to terms, what may not happen then? I confess that I view our position with alarm."

The members of the fraternity rose up in arms in a moment. Monsieur was an alarmist. He overrated the power possessed by the opposite sex. He underrated the superior force of *MEN*. Monsieur Legrand stood on his toes.

"The fact is," broke in the little man, "that our friend is evidently unfortunate. It has not been his habit to triumph in these amiable contests with the ladies, in which we are all sometimes involved. With me it has been different. It is, I suspect, a question of eye entirely. There is a certain power of eye which *some* men possess, before which women quail."

There was a big, powerful man, with a bushy beard, seated at an adjoining table to that belonging to the strikers. He was playing at dominoes with his little boy, and seemed to be much amused by the conversation of the brotherhood, and especially by the remarks which came from the very young man with the goggle eyes. Indeed, he appeared to have the greatest difficulty in restraining his laughter.

"Come," said the powerful man, addressing his son. "Come, Adolphe. It has struck ten.

We must go home, or we shall get a scolding from mamma. Good evening, gentlemen," he continued, addressing the brotherhood. "I've been married some years, and I don't think you'll find your Strike answer."

There was a great noise and chattering kept up among the strikers after this interruption, and it was some time before they returned to their usual dignified style of conversation.

When they did get back to it, it was perhaps on a bigger scale than ever. The little man said that their neighbour was a melancholy specimen of the hen-pecked tribe—most hen-pecked men, by-the-by, *were* big, or vice versa.

A gentleman with a red nose and redder cravat corroborated these sentiments, as, indeed, did all the other strikers who happened to be present. In fact, these powerful gentlemen ended in being quite uproarious in their great consciousness of strength.

Yet, when our friend Pierre got to be alone again, it must be acknowledged that all his lowness of spirits returned in redoubled force.

III.

One morning Madame Beaucour was surprised by an application from her daughter, so unexpected that it took her breath away.

"Mamma," the young lady began, "is Louise going to the market this morning?"

"Yes, dear child; she is going as usual."

"Mamma, I should like to go with her."

"You—why, Eugénie, what are you thinking about?" replied Madame Beaucour, with wide-open eyes.

"I have taken it into my head," said Eugénie, smiling.

Of course she had her way, though madame, who was for keeping her daughter in cotton, did all she could to dissuade her.

"What can have come over the child?" said the worthy lady, in colloquy with her husband, after Eugénie had departed. "It is so unlike her character to want to engage in an occupation of the sort. And now I think of it, Monsieur Beaucour, she was dressed in a manner altogether at variance with her usual style. She had on old things of last year, which I thought she had given away long ago. What can it all mean?"

Monsieur Beaucour shrugged his shoulders.

"Des caprices," he said, in a resigned tone; "des caprices!"

Meanwhile, the young lady and the old servant had started on their expedition; the latter being nearly as much astonished at this strange freak as Madame Beaucour herself had been. She was more suspicious, though. "There is something underneath it all," she said to herself.

"Louise," said mademoiselle, as they walked along side by side, "I have been thinking a little, and I have come to the conclusion that a young girl ought to learn something about housekeeping, marketing, and that sort of thing."

"Ah, that's it, is it?" retorted Louise, dryly.

"Yes," replied the young lady, "and so I shall want you to tell me what is the proper price to give for things, and how one is to know when they are good of their kind, and, in short, all about it."

Louise was a difficult person to deal with. "Mademoiselle will find it a long business," she remarked.

"Still it can be done?"

"Oh yes, no doubt it can be done," was the cautious reply; and then, after a pause, "Mademoiselle has put on her old things?"

"Yes; this is not an occasion when one should be too smart."

"There is something underneath it all," persisted Louise.

The pair bad by this time arrived at the scene of the morning's operations, and our young lady did, indeed, find that Louise's occupation was by no means a simple one. Her lesson had begun, however, and she was attentive. The first thing to be done in these cases, as it appeared to Eugénie, was to assume an air of extreme discontent, or even ferocity, to disparage every article which was exposed for sale, and to appear as if not wanting any one of them. "I don't like any of these things, but, if a tolerable specimen—such as, by the way, I don't see—came in my way, at a very low price indeed, it is just possible, perhaps, that I might be tempted." Now, Louise did not say all this in so many words, but her bearing and the aspect of her countenance said it quite plainly nevertheless. This was the first observation made by Mademoiselle Eugénie. She was next struck by the variety and number of the tests applied by the old servant to any object which she contemplated buying. Suppose, for instance, she had to purchase a fowl: after scrutinising several fowls, as they lay in rows on the shelves of the poultry-stall, she would select one at last with a sigh, and, weighing it in her hand, would again sigh, and shake her head gloomily; that done, she would poke the animal severely about the breast and wings with her fore-finger; then she would turn it over, and disparage its back; then she would open one of the deceased's eyes, and scrutinise the glazed organ closely; moreover, she would next force the creature's beak open, and gaze down its throat; finally, she would smell the body all over, and, depositing it again upon its shelf, would look casually at more poultry, as if she had given up all idea of the bird which she had been examining so carefully. But, after a while, she returned to it, as if in despair of finding anything better, and would condescend to ask its price. This would, however, not be named till the proprietor of the bird had uttered a panegyric on its merits: "It was the best fowl in the market; she was not sure that by rights it was for sale; she believed that madame, the wife of the prefect, expected it." At last, after many repetitions of the original question, the price would be named.

The signal this for such a disturbance as com-

monly attends continental bargaining:—screams, maledictions, vituperations, rushings away, reluctant coming back again, reductions of five centimes, of ten centimes, appeals to Heaven, denunciations, five centimes more off; last appeals, resolutions fixed, resolutions unfixed again; finally, amicable settlement, threepence-halfpenny English saved upon the bargain, and a dinner.

It was the same with everything; not a lettuce, not a radish without the same tests, the same screamings, the same denunciations, the same rushings away, and the same reluctant coming back. Noise, confusion, uncertainty, haggling all over and over again at every fresh purchase, and everybody fearfully in earnest. This veteran, Louise, would come away from a turnip triumph as elated as if she had won a queendom.

It must be acknowledged that Mademoiselle Beaucour came back from her first experience of marketing a good deal daunted. "And this," she said to herself—"this is the sort of thing which these conceited bachelors of Marseilles expect us to do, is it? I am to tuck up my skirts—of a cheap material, too, mind—and to put on a thick pair of shoes, and go out in all weathers, with an umbrella, and fight for centimes with old women for half a morning together; and I am to look down the throats of the fowls, and to sniff at bunches of turnips, and poke at the mutton, and pinch the pears, because these stingy bachelors don't choose to keep the proper number of servants to do all these things for one. 'Don't choose,'" she repeated to herself, meditatively. "Perhaps they can't help themselves. I never thought of that." And with that she fell to thinking.

Mademoiselle Eugénie had not found that expedition with Louise very agreeable, then. Still she took no one into her confidence on the subject. Next day and the next, and for many subsequent days, she was ready at the proper time, and Louise would at last as soon have thought of starting without mademoiselle as without her basket. The good woman's suspicions, however, were not allayed. She still said to herself, "There is something underneath it all;" just as the philosophical Monsieur Beaucour always had the same answer ready for madame whenever she began to speculate on the change in their daughter's habits: "Des caprices, Madame Beaucour, des caprices, toujours!"

And so at last it was brought about that Mademoiselle Eugénie became such a proficient in bargaining, by dint of much practice and severe study, that she took to doing the marketing on her own responsibility, and Louise's functions were finally reduced to carrying the basket, and offering occasional advice.

Now it came to pass, that one morning our friend, Monsieur Pierre Grandal, after passing a restless night, got up betimes, and took it into his head that before going to his labours he would refresh himself with a walk round the

market-place. In France there are flowers, as well as vegetables and fruit, exposed for sale on these occasions, and the scene on market-day is not a little picturesque. Monsieur wandered about among the stalls, listlessly enough, till he came at last to one where a young person, as the French idiom expresses it, with a servant bearing a basket by her side, stood with her back towards him, cheapening some very nice-looking lettuces.

It is the custom, on the stage, for a gentleman dressed in all respects as usual, to borrow some friend's cloak for purposes of disguise, and wrapping it round about him, to become instantly unrecognisable by his most intimate friends. Yet, in real life, a disguise is a very difficult thing to achieve. Certain it is, that in spite of the humble garments in which this fair lettuce-cheapener was attired, young Monsieur Grandal had no sooner set eyes upon her back, than he could have sworn to her confidently; and this even if he had not heard her voice uttering such dulcet and harmonious sounds (though it was only being exercised about centaines and cabbages), that if mademoiselle had known that Monsieur Pierre was listening to her, she could not have spoken in a more fascinating tone, or shown a keener power of making a bargain. Perhaps she did know that our young friend was in the neighbourhood; but she certainly evinced the greatest surprise when she turned round and saw him. Meeting under such circumstances, these two young people forgot for a moment their sulks, and began to talk.

That conversation had important consequences. The Strike, as far as Monsieur Grandal was concerned, was entirely at an end. *She* had abdicated. She had seen the error of her ways. She had not thought seriously of life before, but now it was obvious to her that it really did behove the wife of a young man with his way to make in the world, to be economical, to dress plainly.

"No, no," cried her companion, generously, ready now to concede on his side.

"Yes, yes," Mademoiselle Eugénie went on; "to dress plainly, or, at any rate, to keep such finery as she might possess for great occasions; while, as to amusements, they were very well now and then, at rare intervals; but the fact was, they lost their attractiveness by too frequent repetition. Domestic pleasures were, doubtless, the best after all, and as to the others, they should be reduced—"

"No, no," again remonstrated the happy Pierre.

"Well, at most, the play three or four times a year, if circumstances were very propitious."

Pierre Grandal could hardly believe his ears. He saw himself now exonerated from the bonds in which that dreadful Strike had held him; for had not Eugénie fairly capitulated?

There was, in fact, now no longer any obstacle to the marriage. Our ex-striker sought the inevitable interview with the Père Beauchour, and, that gentleman's consent having been obtained,

the necessary preliminaries to the great ceremony were set about without delay. The ceremonies which belong to, and which precede, the solemnisation of matrimony in France are numerous and elaborate. With these, however, it is fortunately not needful to trouble the reader. Enough for us, that they were all duly observed, and that the sun shone upon the bride to the heart's content of every one.

IV.

That honeymoon excursion which is so inevitable a part of the English wedding, is by no means considered equally indispensable on the other side of the Channel. In bourgeois society especially it is common enough for the bride and bridegroom to spend the honeymoon at home among their friends, receiving visits, repaying them in due time, and in every way leading quite a public life.

Our young couple then sat up in state, as became their position, and the bourgeoisie, in Sunday clothes, rallied round them with compliments and set phrases adapted to the occasion, such as the reader will find, if he likes to look for them, in certain French publications on the etiquette to be observed in connexion with weddings.

The Grandal couple were strictly in order in all these social matters, and young madame was pronounced on all sides to be quite a model bride, doing nothing—to use a familiar but not very correct expression—all day, and dressing up in a succession of toilettes, which the initiated pronounced to be "ravishing."

Weil, for a time, this was all very satisfactory. It was not to be expected that madame, in the full glory of her new title, should trouble herself about household matters, or should ever make her appearance clad in any but the most distinguished garments. Silks, and lace, and the shawl of matronhood were indispensable. The newly married lady would have disappointed all her female friends if she had not given them living evidence that the fashion prints in the *Gazette Rose* were possibilities, not mere brilliant chimeras emanating from the brain of some art-genius.

But as time passed, and our young couple began to settle down into the ordinary routine of life, it began to strike Monsieur Pierre Grandal as a curious circumstance, that his young wife showed no symptoms of any intention of descending from the position of bride to that of housewife, which her recent studies under our old friend Louise had fitted her to fill. Not only did our newly made bourgeoisie altogether abstain from marketing, but she seemed to think it beneath her to give even the necessary directions to the servant on whom this duty devolved, or to mix herself up in any way whatsoever with the sordid cares of economical housekeeping. Everything was left to the bonne, and results more curious than satisfactory ensued.

Nor was this all. Nothing could exceed the

voracious appetite for amusements of all kinds exhibited by madame since her marriage. The friends of both husband and wife did, as the Hints on Etiquette demanded of them, provide a certain amount of evening recreation for our young couple; réunions at which there was something done in the way of card-playing, of games, of music, of conversation—the company separating at an early hour, after partaking of sundry cakes and innocent beverages. But this sort of dissipation was not enough for our young lady. There is a theatre of considerable pretensions at Marseilles, and madame demanded (attention is requested to the word) to be frequently escorted by her husband to that place of entertainment, the demand not to be refused, on pain of—alas! an amount of pouting which drove the unfortunate Pierre to the verge of distraction. And then madame's tantrums were of such a peculiar sort! In the midst of her sulks, or when her husband had got to be panic-stricken, she would burst out suddenly into a fit of laughing, at which the honest man was more frightened than ever.

One day Monsieur Pierre ventured on a mild remonstrance. He had been looking into his accounts, and had discovered that the goings out and the comings in were not harmonious. There were discrepancies. Laxity in the housekeeping arrangements, continual visits to the theatre, carriage-hire, which such visits rendered indispensable—these, and the ravishing toilets of madame, were running away with the limited income of our friend, after a fashion which terrified Monsieur Pierre not a little. In fact, he was lashed up at last to such desperation, that speech, ay, even though it should lead to unpleasantness, was a relief which must be had.

"Look here, cherished one," he began. "I have been looking into money matters, and I find that we are spending too much. We must become more economical."

"More economical!" echoed the lady. "Why, we spend nothing as it is."

"There will soon be nothing to spend," replied Monsieur Grandal. "You never—never go to market now. Before you were married—"

"Before I was married, monsieur, it was different. A young girl is one person, and a married lady is altogether another. I am not going to compromise myself by haggling in the market now, I can tell you."

"Why, Eugénie," groaned her husband, in simple consternation, "is this you?"

"Silence, sir!" screamed the lady; and then she went off into hysterics, but whether of tears or laughter, poor Monsieur Pierre could not make out. So he gave it up, and went away out of the house; but his back was hardly turned, before madame jumped up from her sofa, and running across to where a photograph of her husband hung against the wall, began to kiss the portrait with all her might. Then she went into the bedroom and kissed his robe-de-chambre, and

even his slippers, and "Oh, my darling, my darling," she cried, "I can't, indeed—I can't keep it up much longer, though I have promised all the young girls of our quarter to take this terrible vengeance."

Pierre wandered about for a time disconsolate, and then he thought that he would go back. It must have been a fit of momentary irritability. He knew Eugénie better than to suppose that she was really what she appeared to be now.

But when he got home full of intentions of reconciliation, there was nobody to be reconciled to. "Madame had gone out," the bonne said. "She had gone out with a gentleman—with Lieutenant Lemorier, in fact. She had not mentioned when she should return."

To our unfortunate friend this intelligence was wormwood. He had gone back to his home with much to say. He wanted to have some explanation. It was impossible to rest, so he got up and went out again, fretting and chafing. "To have gone out with that hateful fellow, too—it was intolerable." Thus he wandered about the town. His expression of countenance was not a joyous one probably. Certain members of the Strike saw him, and judged each other facetiously. "Our friend does not look happy," they said; "he has been taken in. He should have kept with us." At last, as it got near dinner-time, Pierre went back to his home. "She had arrived by this time?" But the bonne said, "No, madame had not appeared."

We all know what waiting is. Pierre waited and waited, and fretted and fumed. The servant came in and proposed dinner, but her master would not hear of it. By-and-by he went out, to the abode of his wife's parents. Had they heard or seen anything of Eugénie?

Nothing.

He came back. It was dark now. Again the bonne besought him to take food, and again he refused. Sitting at the window, and looking out, then getting up and pacing the room, then to the window again, that was how he passed the evening.

At last it struck eleven. He would take some decided steps. As he approached the outer door, there was a ringing at the bell. He opened the door himself, and his wife stood before him.

"Are you going out?" she asked, calmly, observing that he had his hat on.

"I was going out," answered Pierre. "Where have you been, Eugénie?" he added, when they got into the salon.

"I have been at a concert," was the careless reply.

"In company with Monsieur Lemorier?" was the next question.

Madame Grandal assented. She did not add, though, that the sub-lieutenant's married sister and her husband had also been of the party.

Grandal was silent for a while. "Eugénie," he said at last, "it is time that this ended, and it must end. What does your conduct

mean? I no longer recognise you. Are you mad?"

"Mad," she laughed scornfully. "Not in the least."

"Then if you are sane," continued her husband, "give me a reasonable answer. What are you doing? What do you mean by your present conduct?"

Eugénie did not answer for a moment. There was a curious movement about her mouth. At last she stammered out, "that she supposed, if her husband was alluding to the concert, that a married woman could go where she liked, and in such company as pleased her. She did not understand what he complained of." She spoke with her head turned at this time, and in rather a strange voice.

"Complain—complain of?" echoed her husband. "Have I not cause to complain? How are you fulfilling the promise that you made? Since the day of your marriage, what has your life been? Has so much as one single thought been given to your home duties? Your extravagance in dress, has it not been greater than ever? Have you not seemed to speculate as to how you could involve me in expenses that should be beyond all measure and reason? Have you not pursued pleasure in a degree that has been outrageous and inexcusable, and now, dissatisfied with what I have provided for you in this way, you have gone away from me, putting yourself under the charge of another, making your husband—a fool before all the world?"

Madame Grandal did not speak. There seemed to be a strange conflict going on within her.

"And this," added her husband, "after persuading me that you were an altered being."

"Deception—all deception," cried the girl at last, the words coming from her with a sort of fury in them. "Deception, and a cheat. What! did you, or any of that wretched band which you were got to join, suppose that you were to be a fit match for a woman if she chose to play the game against you? Oh!" there were tears in her eyes now, though there was contempt in her words. "Oh, with what follies did you please yourselves, you and the others—with what self-complacent sophistries did you nurse that pride of yours! How you gloried in your fancied strength and in our fancied weakness." Her sobs stopped her here for a moment, but quickly she spoke again. "And putting thus all manliness and all real strength away from you, could you not guess that something of added power would be given to those weak opponents whom you despised—that what you lost, would certainly be gain to them." Again she paused, unable, as it seemed, to go on, because of her failing voice.

"Yes," she continued at last, "you put from you what of right belonged to you—forbearance,

perseverance, patience. Were not those the real signs of strength? In what indeed does strength lie but in these? Is strength shown in a fight with women—using such weapons as might belong to them, not those which were alone manly, and to which—to which—she would alone succumb." Again she stopped, but no interruption came from her husband, and presently she went on once more:

"Was it good," she asked, speaking more quietly, "to lose your patience and forbearance, those real signs of strength, and suffer yourselves to be drawn into this—this—brawl with women? Was it good to speak to me as you did at first? Dictating to me as to an enemy, not appealing to the reason of a friend?"

She stopped and seemed to wait for her husband's answer. He was pondering with downward glance, as if some thought had been presented to him, now, for the first time.

"It was not good," he said, slowly.

She was by his side in a moment. "Oh, Pierre," she cried, "do you really mean those words?"

"And so you have been playing me a trick all this time?" he said, taking her hand; "was that good, Eugénie?"

Madame Grandal looked down, a little abashed.

"And your marketing expeditions, your saving up of your finery, your experiments in domestic economy—all was a sham, was it?"

"Yes," replied the girl; "but then," she added quickly, "so was the other."

"What other?"

"Why, all that has happened since our marriage! Yes, all to plague you, and to bring you to acknowledge—"

"To acknowledge what?"

"Why, what you have just owned, that the STRIKE was a failure from beginning to end. But, Pierre," she added, "there is one great difference between the two pieces of acting."

"And what is that?" asked her husband.

"Why, that the last—the hateful part—the part of the cruel, heartless woman, with objects of her own to attain, in perpetual opposition to her husband, separating her interests from his; that shameful rôle, the very acting of which in sport has made me hate myself, is discarded and abandoned henceforth, to be taken up no more for ever; while the other—the character of the faithful housewife; the friend, not the enemy of her life-partner; his ally, not his antagonist—this part shall be repeated every day till that great curtain descends which, sooner or later, brings all our performances to an end!"

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